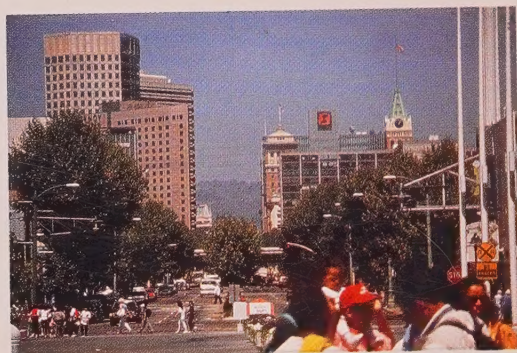


# A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN OAKLAND

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Presented to the people of Oakland by the Downtown Vision Committee &  
The Office of Economic Development and Employment, City of Oakland

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## FORWARD

This report to the workshop participants and all the people of Oakland is a summary of our mutual efforts and agreements about the future of Oakland.

Envision a city with fountains dotting downtown, broad boulevards bustling with people, a creek in a park linking a lake to a bay. A group of bankers, business leaders, developers, planners, artists and policy makers did imagine that city. And, they saw it as downtown Oakland.

This report outlines that vision for downtown Oakland. It is also a "call to arms" - a call to all people of Oakland to join together to chart its future.

Oakland is one of America's most naturally beautiful cities. It prospered through World War II, but has struggled through the flight to the suburbs, regional competition for development, the destruction of Broadway to build BART, and most recently, through the devastating effects of the Loma Prieta earthquake. Still, the beauty and the spirit of the place has always made it clear that the city would one day return to its glory. Now, at the close of the 20th Century, is the time to chart that course.

At the end of 1990, just as Mayor Elihu Harris was to take the reins of city government from Mayor Lionel Wilson, I was fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to lead a workshop team which guided 53 Oakland stakeholders in search of a vision for their city. Rather than using outside experts to present ideas to them, the workshop team helped the group to define its own future in an exercise known as a "Taking Part" workshop. It was grueling -- two days and nights of city tours, drafting, role playing, discussion, but the experience left us excited about the degree of community consensus on basic principles for downtown development.

\* \* \*

Oakland is a uniquely people-oriented city. It has the feeling of a large, warm, extended family, where people live together with a real sense of community and enjoy each other. This quality is unique in a major city. Oakland has some of the feelings of a small town but with the advantages of a big city. It is multi-ethnic and enriched by its diversity. It is, in a sense, a model of 21st Century life in America.

Downtown sets the theme for this feeling of community and extended family. Although downtown is only one piece of the mosaic of Oakland neighborhoods, it is in effect the centerpiece of the neighborhoods. It is the glue that holds the neighborhoods together, and forms them into a city.



Downtown is not more important than the other neighborhoods, but it functions as the place where the region, the state, the nation and the world usually do business in Oakland. Some workshop participants called downtown "everybody's neighborhood", and others "the civic living room". At its best, downtown represents to the world community what Oakland is in microcosm. "Festival at the Lake", that joyous family party, demonstrates what downtown Oakland is about. It is about people.

The best way to summarize the vision of the workshop is to recount one of its most exciting dialogues. We asked each participant to "share with the group your favorite city in the world and tell why you liked it the most." the list included Dar es Salaam, Paris, Washington, D.C., Geneva, and Atlanta. The reasons the group gave for selecting these cities tells much about what the Vision for Oakland can be:

These cities make good use of their topography and scenery. They make good use of water. They feel safe. They "feel good" to walk in. They have good transportation systems. They have a variety of open spaces and parks which give a sense of organization to the city. They have a dynamic feeling. They have ethnic diversity. They have neighborhoods. They have cultural facilities (including universities). They have a strong sense of character. They are interesting and friendly. They have lots of street level activity. The streets organize the city; they are not merely roads for cars. There are lots of people living in the city. There are landmarks in the cities' centers. The buildings/architecture are notable.

What emerged from this examination of other cities was a clear direction for what Oakland citizens want it to be. The vision builds on Oakland's existing character. It reenforces its special quality, and it drives hard to change those things in the downtown which are not working. The vision emphasizes that "living" and "life" are what really counts in a city, and that development and structural change are only ways to achieve what people want for themselves and their children.

Here are the major steps which the workshop participants recommended to achieve their vision:

- 1) Encourage managed growth in the downtown.
- 2) Preserve the integrity of downtown neighborhoods.
- 3) Build upon the existing downtown structure.
- 4) Strengthen attributes which contribute to a sense of place.
- 5) Encourage a pedestrian quality in the downtown.
- 6) Build a city-wide support for the downtown.
- 7) Develop an outreach strategy.
- 8) Maintain a process to guide the future of downtown.

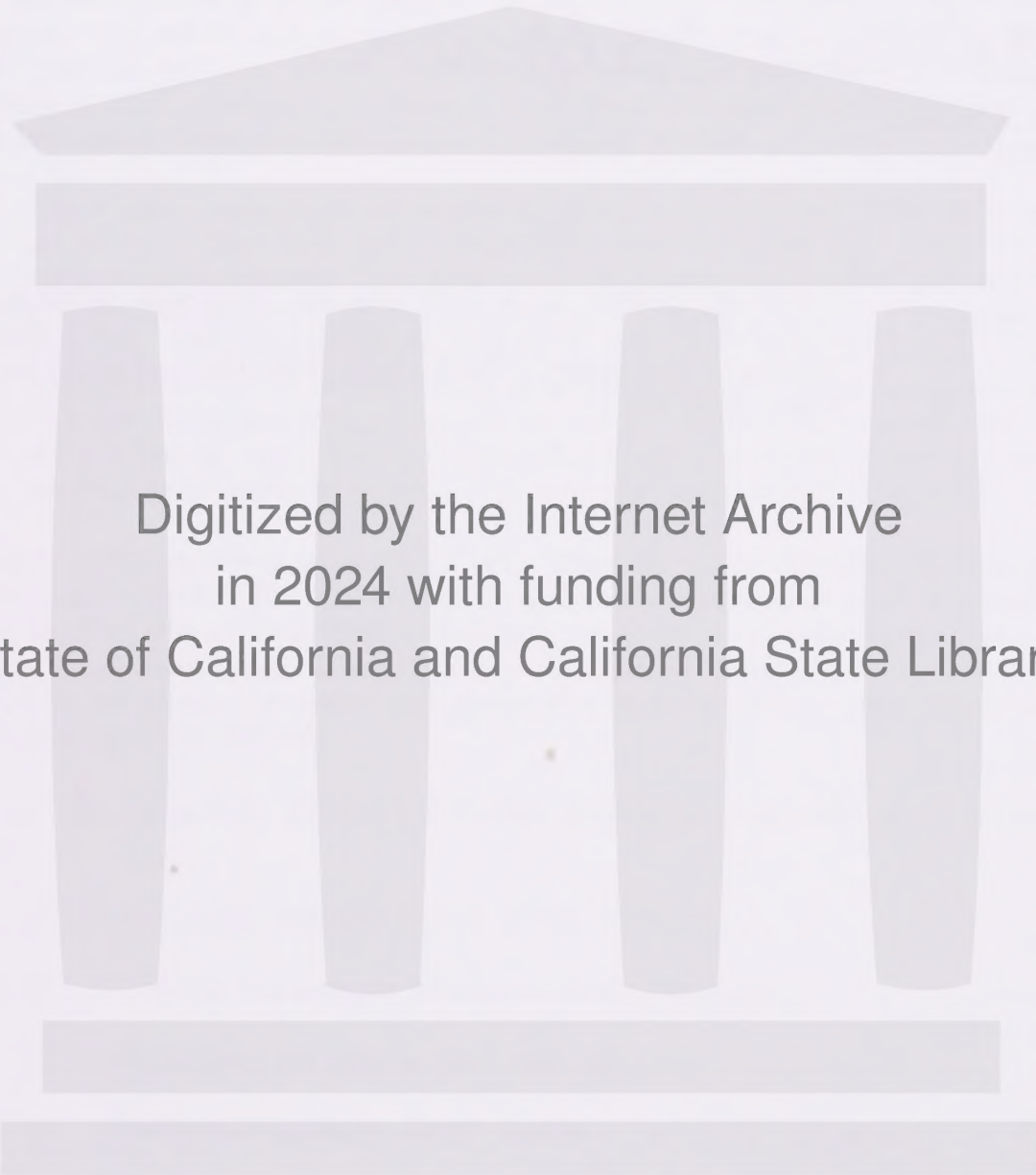


Another result of the workshop was an awareness of the usefulness of this "Taking Part" approach and how it might, in fact, serve as a tool for all the neighborhoods to develop their own vision for the future. As a prototype, this process, if applied in each neighborhood, could develop the rest of the mosaic which is Oakland. Then indeed a city-wide Vision could be synthesized into an overall City Plan as a real and more detailed MASTER PLAN -- a glorious ROAD MAP to the 21st Century.

Lawrence Halprin

Lawrence Halprin  
July 1991

(Lawrence Halprin is a town planner, landscape architect, and originator of the "Take Part" workshop process. He is currently working on the design for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C.)



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August, 1991





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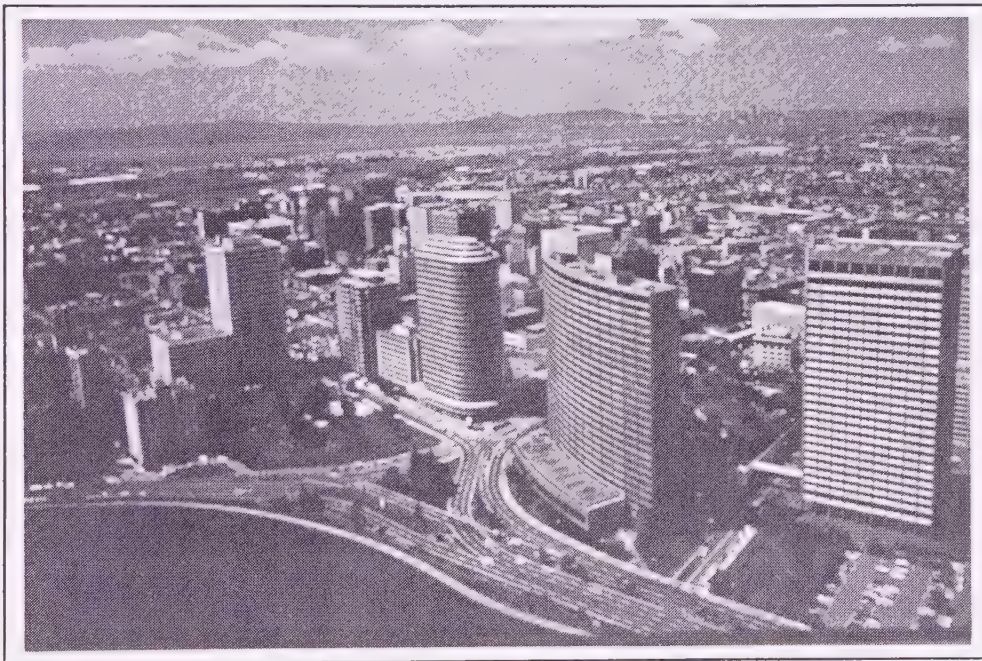
## I. Project Overview





### DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The skyline of downtown Oakland glitters. An impressive array of office towers seems to march from the City Center area, near Twelfth and Broadway, to the Kaiser Center area, at Lake Merritt. Since 1980, over four million square feet of commercial and institutional office space have been added to downtown Oakland. Commercial office projects at City Center and Kaiser Center; and institutions such as the Oakland Federal Building, and CalTrans, are bringing additional employment to downtown. A major regional retail center is anticipated for the area north of Fourteenth Street, west of Broadway. Various residential and commercial development projects are contemplated in the Old Oakland area.



*"Oakland's 'downtown' is so large - there are many wonderful, positive pieces - but they are discreet, spread out. The problems, or lack of activities, recede if you concentrate on the good things."*

*Susan Chamberlin*

*Figure 1: Downtown Oakland Skyline*

Despite these encouraging signs, problems in the downtown persist. Broadway and surrounding streets still suffer from the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake. Many buildings remain vacant, blighted, and unproductive. In addition, new developments like Jack London's Waterfront and Old Oakland have had problems attracting tenants. The fate of the proposed retail center development is uncertain. Downtown is characterized by little street vitality, minimal retail trade, almost no night time activity, and an image perceived by many to be negative.

*"The focus of downtown should be adopted soon or it will be too costly to explore"*

*Gordon Henderson*

In order to address the problems currently facing downtown and to effectively plan for tomorrow, the City of Oakland has called for a "vision" of the future, a "roadmap" which can guide and direct development in the downtown, produce a quality environment, attract development and provide the City with resources to respond positively to actual and perceived needs.

## **RELATED EFFORTS**

Presently, there are two efforts under way which bear a direct relation to, and have an impact on, the establishment of a vision for downtown Oakland. First and foremost, the Oakland Strategic Planning Process has recently been initiated to develop a broadly-based sense of the kind of city Oakland is to become. This is a citywide effort. The downtown vision plan can be an important, contributing element to this process.

Second, the Central District Development Program (CDDP), which was completed in 1986, has provided the City with a thorough analysis of existing conditions and a detailed set of programs for managing the downtown environment. The CDDP can provide an effective mechanism for implementing the vision plan.

## **THE "TAKING PART" WORKSHOP PROCESS**

In November 1990, over fifty municipal, community, and business leaders were brought together in Oakland under the auspices of the City's Office of Economic Development and Employment (OEDE) and a group of concerned downtown/Broadway stakeholders commonly referred to as the Broadway Symposium. OEDE and the Symposium recognized the need to formulate a vision which could provide a guide for the future of downtown Oakland, and for Broadway. The city was sensitive to the fact that this vision needed to come from the citizens of Oakland rather than from design professionals. For that reason, an approach which involved strong citizen's participation was recommended.





*Figure 2: Workshop Participants gather to discuss the future of downtown.*

*"Realistically, in order to have a downtown plan, you must first have a vision. A clear vision is the foundation of any good plan."*

*Jeffrey Chew*

The City elected to utilize a "workshop" process to work toward a vision. The workshop process employed was called "Taking Part". The process was founded on a very basic principle: that stakeholders in a community have both the right and the responsibility to establish what their community should be, to establish its quality and character of life, and to explore alternative ways their city can develop.

The workshop participants were brought together for two sessions. The first of these occurred in November, 1990. At this workshop, participants were asked to visualize desired (and undesired) future states for downtown, to develop visions for the future of the downtown and for the future of Broadway. To expand their point of view, participants were asked to reflect upon their favorite cities around the world. Lastly, the workshop participants were asked to consider obstacles to achieving their visions and means to address these obstacles.



A second workshop occurred in February, 1991. At this workshop, participants reviewed information which had been synthesized from the previous event. They were asked to consider a means to broaden the downtown constituency, improve the image of the downtown, set short- and long-term downtown goals, and select an appropriate role for the workshop participants to play in downtown's future.

An outstanding feature of the workshop has been the emphasis placed on "human resource development," issues such as outreach and consensus building, image improvement, and organizational next steps. These issues were given equal importance with physical planning issues such as a need for growth, preservation of existing character, and encouraging a quality pedestrian-oriented environment. This emphasis recognizes the need to balance human issues alongside physical design issues in order to achieve the type of healthy, vital downtown which was envisioned in this process.

### SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

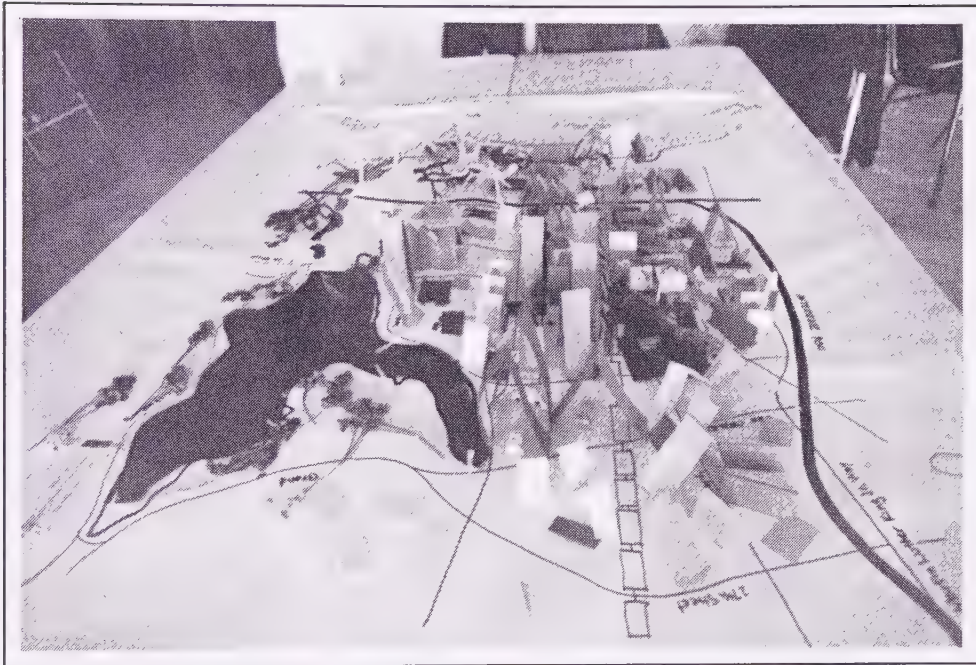
The workshop was characterized by enthusiasm for the downtown, and animated discussion about its future. The "Vision" developed for the downtown was not intended to be unanimous. Participants presented competing ideas about the future of downtown. A sense of commonality regarding the future of downtown may be found within this discourse. The following recommendations reflect the common elements which ran throughout the workshop process. These recommendations form the basis of this report.

- Encourage Managed Growth in the Downtown.
- Preserve the Integrity of Downtown Neighborhoods.
- Build Upon the Existing Downtown Structure.
- Strengthen Attributes Which Contribute to Oakland's "Sense of Place."
- Encourage a Pedestrian Quality to the Downtown.

- Build City-wide Support for the Downtown.
- Improve the Image of Downtown.
- Maintain a Process to Guide the Future of Downtown.

*"How many more times are we going to say 'We're on the edge, we're so close, what potential. It's all possible. . . It's all there folks,' ready for us to make it happen!!!"*

*Steve Costa*



*Figure 3: One vision of downtown Oakland prepared by a workshop group.*





## II. Encourage Managed Growth in the Downtown



Workshop participants believed that continued growth in the downtown is good. They explicitly called for more growth in the office, retail, entertainment, and residential sectors. Urban vitality and street activity were regarded as desirable conditions. Overall, participants adhere to a pro-growth philosophy. However, participants agreed that, in order to protect the positive aspects of the quality of life in the downtown, growth should be managed and directed to achieve the greatest public good. This represents the framework for the downtown vision.

*"Downtown is complete and has so much potential."*

*"Downtown is active but needs banners, people, and development of nodes of activity (e.g. shopping, entertainment, cultural)."*

*Austin Penney*

### ATTRACT MORE DOWNTOWN ACTIVITY

It was agreed that downtown Oakland should expand its role as a major regional center of activity.

#### Office

New office development has been occurring throughout downtown Oakland. It has accounted for the largest share of growth in the downtown. The development of additional commercial office projects was seen as desirable. Two distinct concentrations of commercial office buildings exist in downtown Oakland, at Lake Merritt, and near the intersection of 13th and Broadway. A third area is comprised of public facilities south of Lake Merritt. Development in these areas seems to be occurring independently of one another. A range of opinions existed as to the value of allowing these employment centers to grow toward each other versus maintaining a series of discrete, distinct employment nodes.

Workshop participants acknowledged that an office population is essential to creating a market that would attract other desired uses to the downtown. However, the growth of high-rise offices was not seen as the sole determinant of a successful downtown. The workshop participants recognized the importance of having a diversity of uses and population groups.

#### Retail/Personal Service

Retail development, especially at the street level, was seen as essential to creating a lively downtown. Workshop participants recognized ground-level retail as a catalyst for enlivening the street. They felt that new destination retail would be desirable for the downtown. The retail development proposed for the area north of 17th Street between San Pablo and Broadway could serve



as a destination retail magnet. Participants suggested that retail development could have a “catalytic” effect on the downtown. Workshop participants debated whether large numbers of customers from throughout the East Bay would be attracted to the downtown. In debating retail development, concern was raised regarding the need to improve and better market the image of the City and its downtown, and the appropriate level of City subsidy for downtown projects. Also, the effect of opening a new major retail complex on the already anemic downtown retail market was debated.

### Residential

It was generally agreed that new residential development is essential to the creation of a “round the clock” downtown. When workshop participants were asked to pick and describe their “favorite cities,” the cities chosen generally contained a sizable residential component as well as a range of affordable housing. The creation of neighborhoods, rather than mere collections of residential buildings was stressed. Neighborhoods should contain a range of uses such as retail shops, recreation and service amenities. Many participants found the downtown to possess such areas in the Lake Merritt district and Chinatown. Participants also stated that they would like to see residential development occur in the Old Oakland neighborhood, in the area south of the Nimitz (live-work artist housing), and along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

*"Need to develop/build more residential close to downtown - City Center. Develop mixed use environment. Today, people want to avoid traffic - congestion - make it easy - provide apartments/condos/townhouses close to work areas and entertainment and dining."*

*Joan Gibb*



*Figure 4: New residential development in the downtown.*

## Culture/Entertainment

Downtown's role as a center of culture and entertainment was stressed. Activities such as performing arts theaters, moving picture theaters, live music, galleries and museums, and eating and drinking establishments attract and bring together diverse segments of the regional population. These aspects of urban life exist already at the Lake Merritt civic center area (Oakland Museum, Kaiser Center), near Jack London Waterfront, and in the Uptown area (Paramount Theater). Workshop participants suggested that the Jack London, Old Oakland and Uptown neighborhoods might develop as round-the-clock centers of eating and entertainment. The Old Oakland area was even described by some as the "Bourbon Street" of Oakland.

*The healthiest (most vital, exciting) parts of the city with the most people are centered around food, consumption/purchase."*

*Marge Gibson-Haskell*

## MAINTAIN EXISTING DIVERSITY OF USES

Downtown Oakland includes a variety of traditional and non-traditional downtown activities. Automobile sales and services at the north end of downtown, the Port of Oakland, the produce district and the home-furnishings retail district at the south end of Broadway, give Oakland's downtown a distinct quality. With the exception of the introduction of "live-work" development into the area south of the Nimitz Freeway, suggestions for new development projects generally reinforced existing downtown use patterns. Though not unanimous, workshop participants generally agreed that these non-traditional uses formed an essential component of the downtown and should continue to exist.

*"Future development can be seen as tying together all of the elements that make Oakland a major city."*

*Mashaal Ahmadieh*

## CREATE A 24-HOUR DOWNTOWN

Many participants mentioned 24-hour activity as a desirable characteristic of their "favorite cities." They agreed that interaction between a variety of population groups at different times of day and night enhances the desirability of the city. In addition, "around-the-clock" activity can bring with it "eyes on the street" and can lead to an improved sense of security in the downtown.



Activity patterns which currently exist in downtown Oakland tend to be weekday and lunch-oriented with the exceptions of Chinatown and the Jack London Waterfront. Workshop participants agreed that the types of activities must be enlarged to attract users around the clock, throughout the week. This could be accomplished by encouraging residential development, culture/entertainment, eating/drinking, and retail to the existing downtown.



*Figure 5: Citizens enjoying the atmosphere of downtown at City Center.*

### III. Preserve the Integrity of Downtown Neighborhoods





### III. PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS

Oakland can be viewed as a collection of individual neighborhoods. Several of these neighborhoods contain main streets, unique architecture, or central spaces with a strong character. Workshop participants generally believed that these neighborhoods provided a basic structure to the downtown and that the integrity of these neighborhoods should be preserved as future development occurs. However, this was not a unanimous viewpoint. Participants debated the merits of developing downtown as a series of discrete villages, each proceeding independently, versus a single “monolithic” entity (the word “Manhattanization” was used). While the merits of the “villages” concept included a small, intimate atmosphere, it was also cited that downtown Oakland appeared to be disjointed and chaotic. A unifying conclusion seemed to be that individual neighborhoods within downtown should retain their unique character but that they should relate to a central organizing element, or set of elements.

The neighborhoods in downtown have imprecise boundaries and often contain seemingly incongruous uses. However, there is a recognized pattern to the various sub-districts within downtown. Workshop participants expressed a preference to build upon these existing neighborhoods in strengthening downtown. The following is a list of the downtown neighborhoods as described by the workshop participants:

- South-of-the-Nimitz
- Lake Merritt Civic Center
- Chinatown
- Old Oakland Area
- Downtown Core
- San Pablo Triangle
- Lake Merritt Residential
- Lake Merritt Office District
- Uptown.

*"The biggest surprise is that downtown is really a series of bits and pieces - some are complete and significant like:*

- Chinatown
- City Center
- Old Oakland-almost
- Lake Area

*Others are incomplete, broken, or meaningless like:*

- City Plaza area
- Retail along Broadway
- Grand (Avenue)"

*Don Dommer*

Figure 6: Downtown Neighborhoods



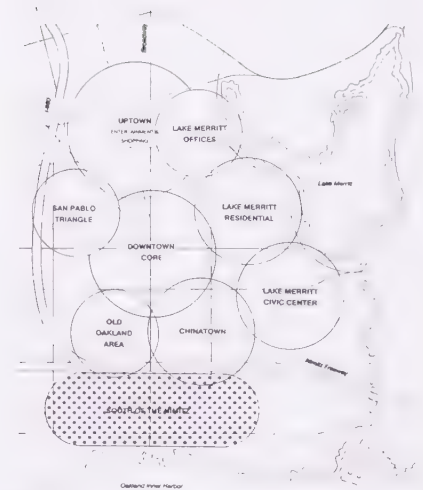


## SOUTH-OF-THE-NIMITZ

### Existing Conditions

The neighborhood south of the Nimitz freeway embraces several districts. They include the Port of Oakland, a home products retail district, a produce wholesale district, a lower Broadway entertainment district, and Jack London Square and Village. While several of these districts appear to be firmly established, the future of the area seems unclear. The destination retail space within Jack London Square has not had success in leasing, while specialty retailing in the home products district is currently thriving. The produce market continues to operate well. However, its relocation away from downtown has been under consideration. The Union Pacific Railway is talking of abandoning its Third Street trackage creating the potential for an east-west trolley which could connect the uses in the South of Nimitz neighborhood.

Some in the group said that the area south of the Nimitz was one which lacked a "distinct focus." The area was one in which diverse uses seemed to exist in proximity to one another, without really interacting in a positive way.



*"Each Jack London block should have specific goals, and ways to accomplish the goals should be incorporated into the program."*

*Lois R. Parr*

Figure 7: Workshop participants on waterfront during "Awareness Walk".



The district between 5th and 6th Streets was viewed as having a strong character, having the potential to become the “Bourbon Street” section of Lower Broadway.

Among the neighborhood’s strongest attributes is the waterfront. Waterfront location was mentioned frequently in the workshop discussion of “favorite cities” such as Paris, Chicago, Dar es Salaam, and Helsinki.

### Recommendations

*"Waterfront has great potential for development. Do something creative with houseboats."*

*Mary Ann Hedderson*

A number of suggestions were put forward to celebrate Oakland as a waterfront city. Jack London Waterfront was offered as a location for a “gateway” monument. It was suggested that the waterfront become a major transit hub, linking rail systems along Third Street with ferry boats in the Estuary. It was also suggested by almost everyone that a continuous waterfront promenade be built to link Jack London Square all the way to Lake Merritt through Estuary Park. The workshop participants stressed the desirability of residential development south of the Nimitz. This would include waterfront housing along the Estuary to the southeast of Jack London Square. The entire area was also considered as a location for “live-work” artist housing.



*Don Dommer*

It was suggested by workshop participants that if the Third Street rail trackage is to be abandoned by Union Pacific, it should be retained and modified to accommodate light rail vehicles which could link the live-work and off-price retail areas back to Broadway.

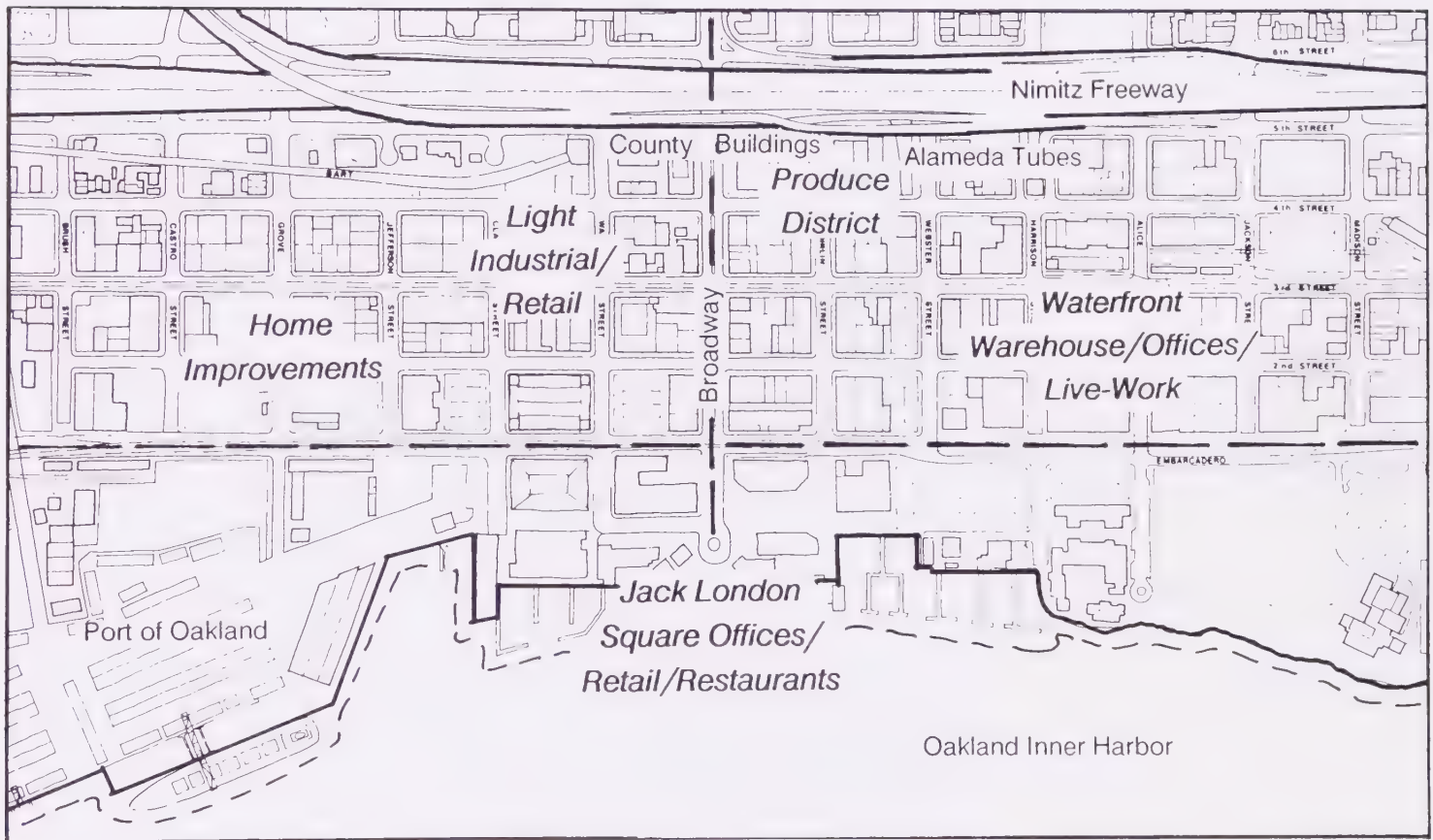
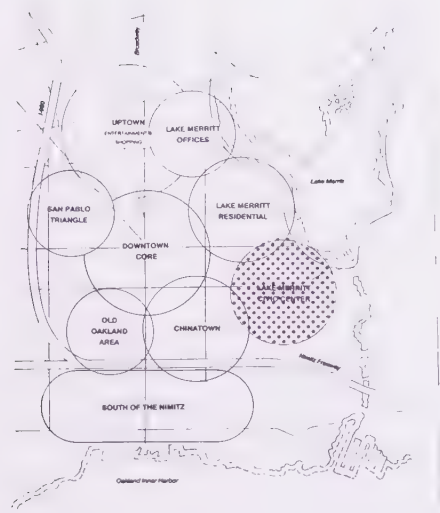


Figure 8: South-of-the-Nimitz Neighborhood



## LAKE MERRITT CIVIC CENTER

### Existing Conditions

The Lake Merritt Civic Center neighborhood consists of a concentration of public institutions located between 14th Street and the Nimitz Freeway, from Alice Street east to the channel. Contained in this area are the Oakland Museum, Laney College, the Kaiser Convention Center, the central branch of the Oakland Public Library, BART headquarters, and various State and County offices. The area also contains some residential and commercial buildings, and the Lake Merritt BART Station. The Civic Center neighborhood is an important employment center within downtown Oakland.

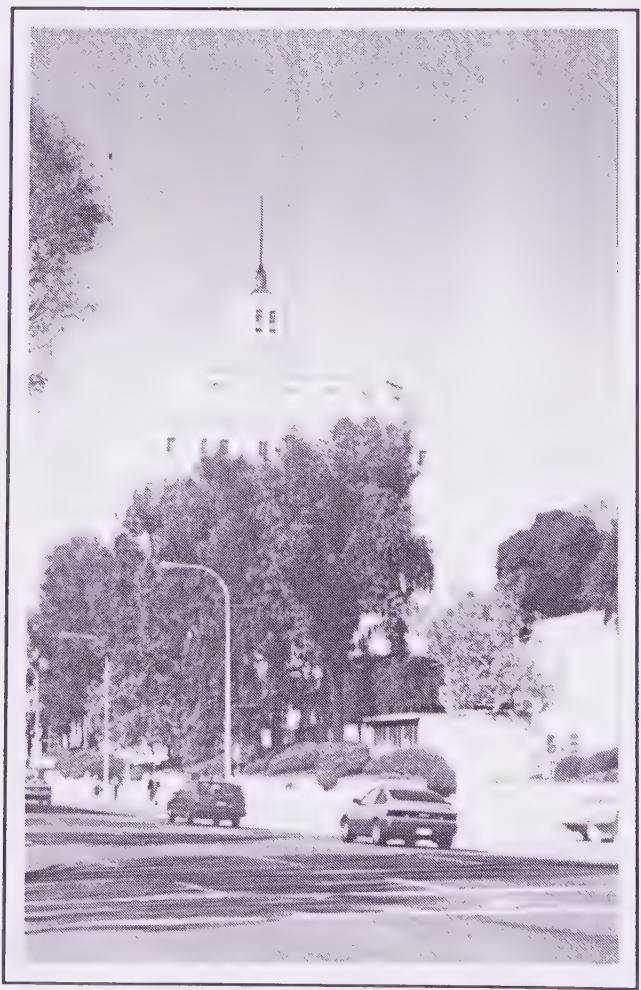
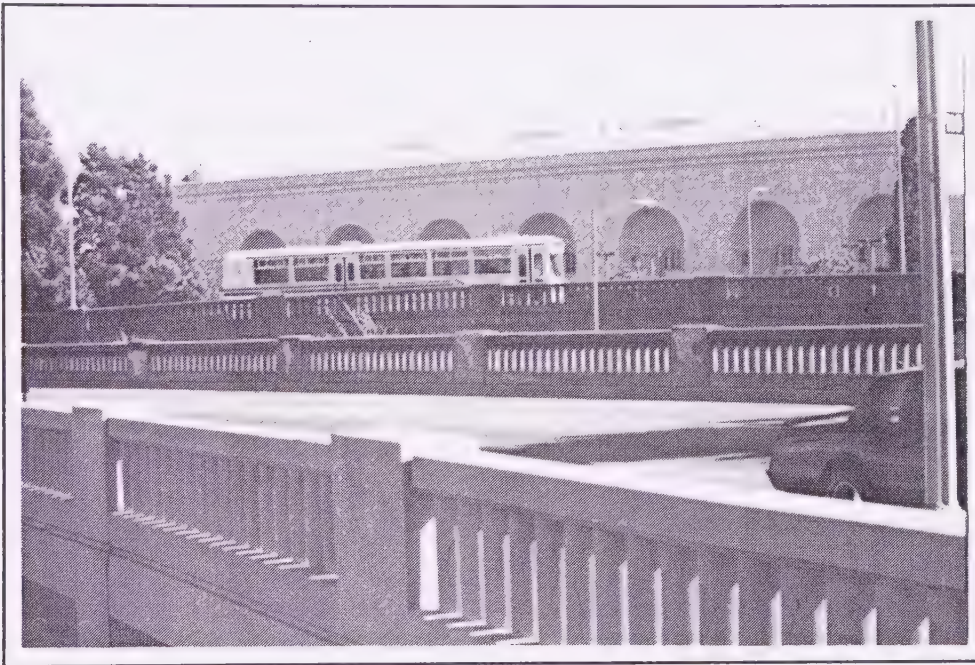


Figure 9: County Courthouse and Oakland Museum at Lake Merritt Civic Center



The area does contain a number of facilities which have a citywide and regional draw. The potential for the area to act as a true Civic Center is somewhat compromised by monumental, stand-alone buildings and a street system which is oriented to vehicular traffic. In addition, the presence of limited-access roads at the northern end of the district creates a barrier between the civic uses and Lake Merritt, and hampers pedestrian and local vehicular movement.



*Figure 10: Roadways separate Kaiser Convention Center from Lake Merritt*



## Recommendations

Workshop participants discussed the potential of increasing the area's residential population by developing new housing near the Lake Merritt BART Station. Strengthening the neighborhood's link to downtown via 12th Street was also suggested. The Civic Center area could become a part of the Estuary-Lake Merritt promenade link if a design solution could be found to overcome the access limitation posed by the roadway cloverleaf south of the Lake. Links to the downtown office core at Broadway, and to a cultural/entertainment/nightlife district in Old Oakland were discussed. Such linkages might be visual, with special treatments such as banners or landscaping, or could be functional, through a light rail transit link or a bus transit route. The workshop group believed that the connection to Broadway along Twelfth Street would provide the best connection.

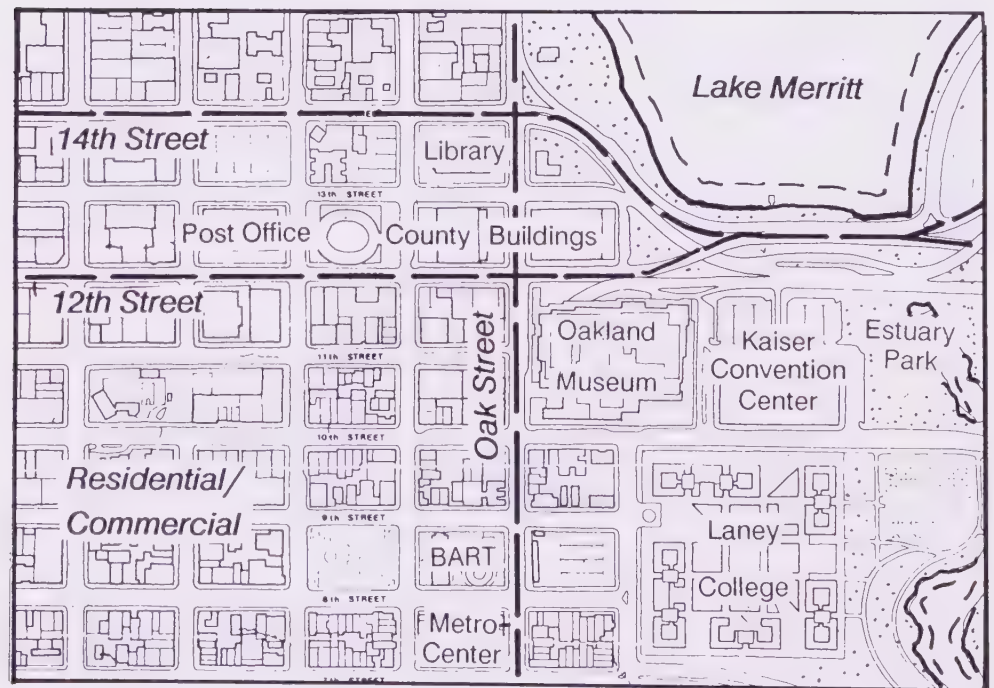


Figure 11: Lake Merritt Civic Center Neighborhood

## CHINATOWN

### Existing Conditions

Oakland's Chinatown has expanded greatly. Today, the district functions as a pan-Asian center for the entire East Bay region. The neighborhood exhibits many of the traits that participants used to characterize their "favorite" cities: strong ethnic flavor, pedestrian quality, mixed retail, residential, and cultural uses, economic vitality, and around-the-clock activity. Pedestrian activity is centered between 8th and 9th Streets east of Broadway, and on Harrison and Franklin Streets.

Recently, Chinatown has experienced construction of retail and residential buildings east of Franklin Street. Development of commercial office space is occurring between Broadway and Franklin Street, Tenth and Eleventh Streets. Phase two of the Pacific Renaissance Center complex is currently under construction on two city blocks bounded by 9th and 11th Streets, Franklin and Webster. When finished, the complex will contain the new regional headquarters for the East Bay Municipal Utility District, 250 units of housings, 100,000 square feet of retail space, a public plaza, and over 800 underground parking spaces.

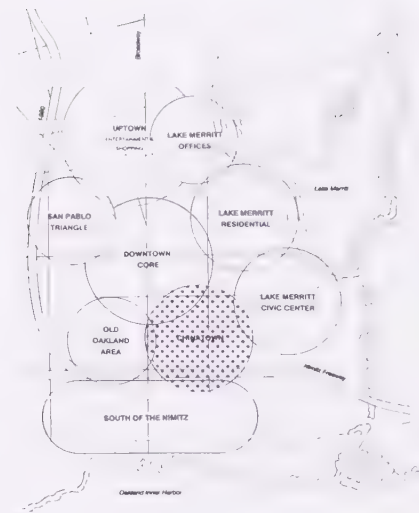


Figure 12: Pedestrian Activity in Chinatown



"We have a very large expanse of space to deal with. The best area I observed was Chinatown, which was vibrant and a relatively open (airy) area for people to enjoy. It was the most well-defined 'neighborhood.'"

Paul Grossberg

Recommendations

Participants agreed that Chinatown should be maintained as a mixed commercial-residential neighborhood. High density residential development was recommended for the area along Broadway, from 11th Street south to the Nimitz Freeway. Workshop participants suggested that the bustling activity on blocks to the east of Broadway should be extended to Broadway. A gateway or other treatment should be developed on Broadway and could serve as a "formal" statement announcing "Chinatown."



Don Dommer



John Glover

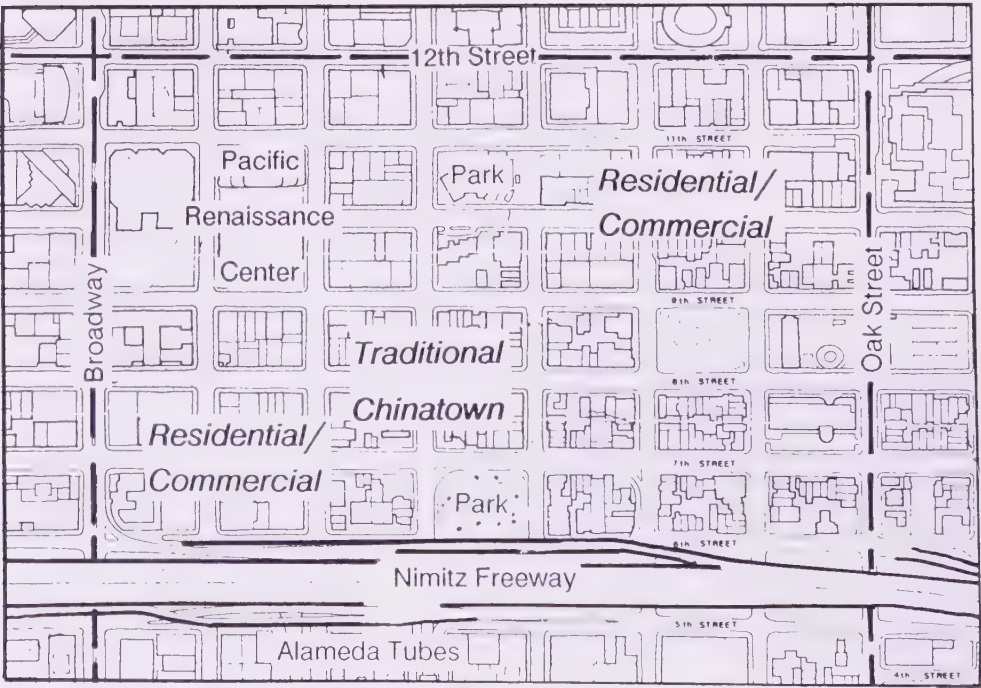


Figure 13: Chinatown Neighborhood

## OLD OAKLAND AREA

### Existing Conditions

Historically, downtown grew northward from the Estuary. Remnants of the city's nineteenth century, mercantile period are preserved in Old Oakland. The Old Oakland neighborhood is bounded by Broadway and the John B. Williams Freeway, the Nimitz Freeway and the Convention Center. Restoration of nineteenth century buildings near Broadway has enhanced the historic character of the area. The neighborhood also contains the Housewife's Market and an open air farmer's market. The western extreme of the neighborhood contains a mix of residential and warehouse uses. The area contains a large open space, Lafayette Park. Lately, the park has been "home" to a considerable homeless population.

Besides the "Old Oakland" project, several other developments are planned or underway in the area. A mixed-use retail-residential project containing more than three-hundred residential units is under consideration by the city and the Lucas-Dallas Company. Other recent ideas for the area emphasize dining and night time entertainment. Recently, a new sports arena for the Golden State Warriors basketball team has been proposed for the area. Such a development was not public knowledge at the time of the workshop and, therefore, was not considered by the workshop participants.

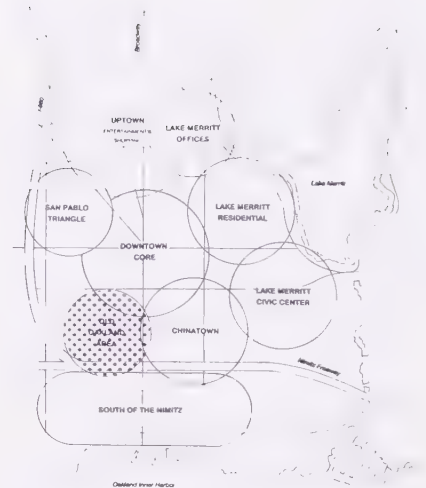


Figure 14: Old Oakland Restoration Project



*"Old Oakland is a logical location to concentrate cultural facilities, galleries and theater and music hall, blues, jazz."*  
Mary Ann Hedderson

Recommendations

Some workshop participants believed that the restored Victorian architecture of the Old Oakland project presented a strong identity toward Broadway, and that it did not need a formal gateway to announce its street presence. Other workshop participants agreed that the Old Oakland neighborhood lacked the strong identity of Old Oakland, the project. Participants also recognized that, as other projects come on-line, the character of the neighborhood should become more firmly established.

Participants identified Old Oakland as a potential center for night time entertainment, dining, and cultural activity. They felt that the neighborhood's character as a cultural center could be enhanced by reinforcing the linkage to the Lake Merritt cultural district along 12th Street. Strengthening the residential base of the neighborhood was proposed by members of the workshop team. The contribution of Old Oakland to the ambience of the downtown was recognized by almost everyone. Maintenance of the architectural scale and character of Old Oakland was considered to be important. The Convention Center was regarded by most participants as a functional and visual barrier between Old Oakland and City Center that should somehow be mitigated to better link these two neighborhoods.

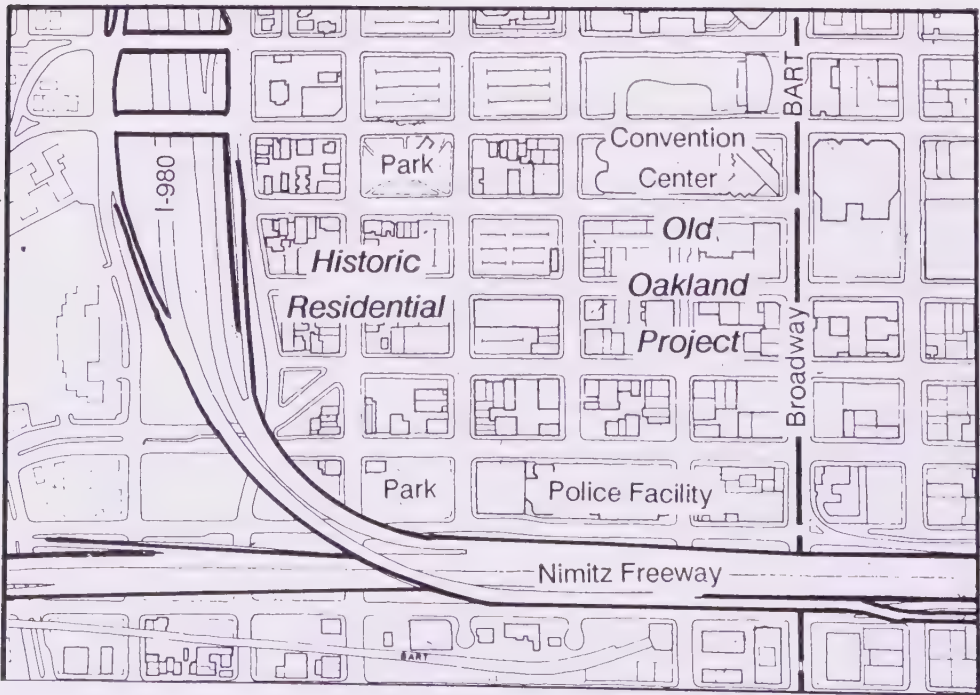


Figure 15: Old Oakland Neighborhood

## DOWNTOWN CORE

### Existing Conditions

This neighborhood was recognized as the “heart of Oakland.” While the Lake Merritt office complex contains more square feet of class-A office space, this area houses a more diverse mix of activities. The area contains the City Center office and retail development, the Preservation Park development, the Parc Oakland Hotel, the Convention Center, the traditional downtown core along Broadway, the Municipal Civic Center area near Broadway and Fourteenth Street, and a less dense service and retail area east of Broadway. This area possesses a strong character and includes a mix of large, new complexes and historic architecture.

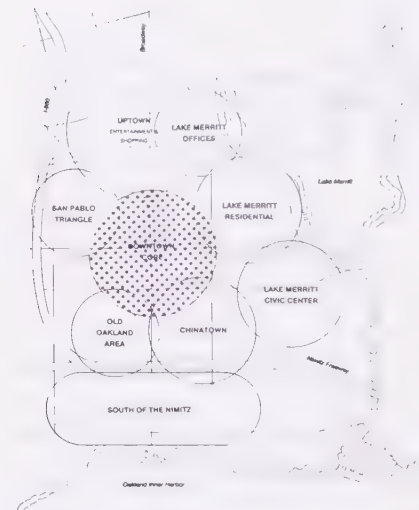


Figure 16: Downtown Core Office Development



John Glover

The City Center/Preservation Park district has been developed by a single developer and contains a clear vision for its future. The vision for the area outside of City Center is less certain. The vitality of the retail shops in City Center can be contrasted with the large number of vacant retail spaces in the traditional ground floor shops located in the area's older office buildings.

### **Recommendations**

Many historic buildings sustained damage in the Loma Prieta quake, among them Oakland City Hall, the Broadway Building and the Rotunda. The future of these buildings continues to be a matter of debate. Workshop participants felt strongly that historic character was an important component in creating a memorable downtown. Most felt that the character of the downtown core was strong and should be preserved. A consensus on whether the historic buildings themselves should be restored was not reached. Participants wanted to retain the existing City Hall, and the Rotunda. A number of participants wanted to preserve and illuminate the Broadway Building, if at all feasible. Alternatively, other participants wanted the building torn down and either left as open space or replaced with another signature building.

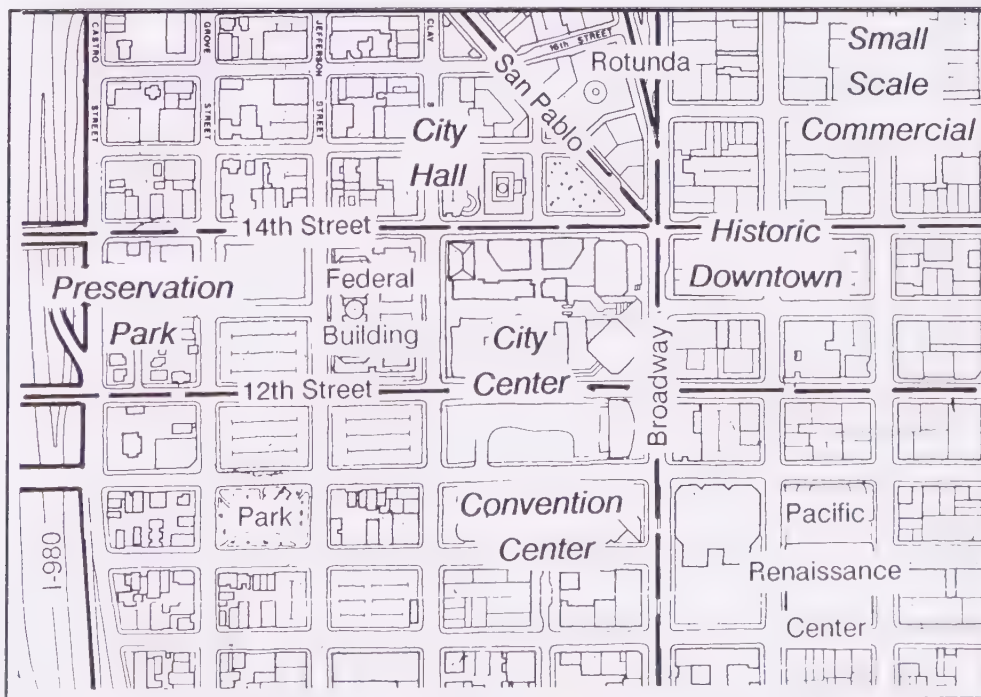
The workshop participants agreed that the downtown needed to have a center and that, at present, it seemed to lack such a point. The exact location of this place was debated. However, it was suggested by almost all participants that it should be located somewhere within the downtown core neighborhood. A number of participants located the center at the corner of 14th and Broadway. This corner is a crossing point for AC Transit routes, provides views up San Pablo Avenue, and has traditionally been the City's "100%" corner. Other participants felt that the corner of 12th and Broadway was more significant because it was located amid several of the downtown's dramatic new developments and provided a more direct connection to Lake Merritt.



Workshop participants saw the core area continuing to function as the nerve center of downtown Oakland. As one participant remarked, it was no accident that protestors selected the corner of 14th and Broadway as a demonstration site. It is still the “crossroads of Oakland.”



*Figure 17: Preservation Park provides a counterpoint to the high-rise character in the downtown*



*Figure 18: Downtown Core*



In general, workshop participants felt that it would be desirable to increase ground-floor occupancy, pedestrian access, and to have a pleasing street-level environment in the downtown core. New office and parking structure development would be required to house street-activating uses (i.e. retail, personal service, entertainment, eating/drinking) on their ground floors.



*Figure 19: Downtown core area blends old and new buildings.*

## SAN PABLO TRIANGLE

### Existing Conditions

The San Pablo Triangle area west of the municipal center and north of Fourteenth Street, is home to downtown's least affluent residents, containing a mix of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, apartment houses, and single-family dwellings. Some restoration activity has occurred near 18th and 19th Streets and Grove Street. This area sustained considerable damage during the Loma Prieta quake, especially to its SRO housing stock. It is characterized by a deteriorated building stock and the presence of numerous surface parking lots. A neighborhood retail area exists to the north of 19th Street along San Pablo Avenue.

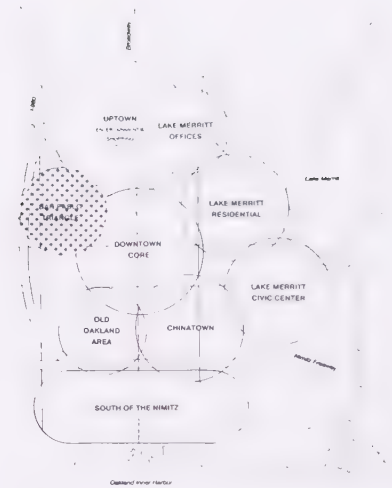


Figure 20: San Pablo Triangle Neighborhood

### Recommendations

The workshop participants saw this area as a possible site for residential neighborhood redevelopment. Residential development, as envisioned, was to be geared to a mix of income groups and was to include neighborhood service retail. Some participants suggested that a public park could replace the existing City Hall garage.



*Figure 21: Rehabilitated Structures in the San Pablo Triangle Neighborhood*



## LAKE MERRITT RESIDENTIAL

### Existing Conditions

The Lake Merritt residential area is made up primarily of multi-family residences. It contains some cultural and retail facilities, however the district lacks a cohesive neighborhood center. The district is adjacent to the Lake Merritt Civic Center and Chinatown to the south, and the Lake Merritt/Kaiser Center office district to the north.

### Recommendations

Workshop participants recognized the value of this district as a cohesive residential enclave within downtown. The Lake Merritt district was assumed to continue as a multifamily housing area, accommodating infill development of market-rate housing.

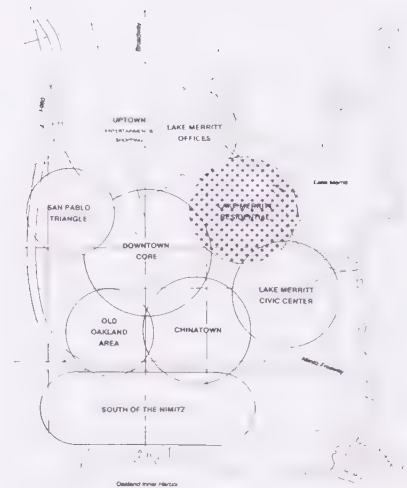
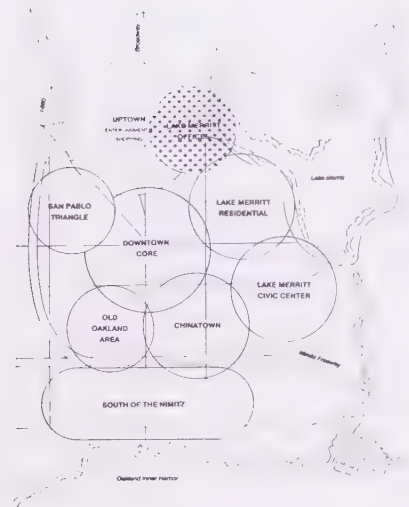


Figure 22: Lake Merritt Residential Neighborhood





## LAKE MERRITT OFFICE

### Existing Conditions

This district contains the largest concentration of Class “A” office space within the downtown. It is predominantly oriented toward commercial office activity. Kaiser Center, which was developed as a “master planned” complex, contains several high-rise office buildings, an elevated roof-top garden, and some ground-level retail. New development is underway in the district, including a new headquarters for Caltrans.

Despite the presence of some service and destination retail, the area functions as a “second” downtown to the core area at 14th and Broadway. With many new buildings, the area lacks the strong, historic character and ground level cohesiveness of the core area. However, these buildings provide a dramatic “downtown skyline” when viewed from across Lake Merritt.



Figure 23: Office Development near Lake Merritt

## Recommendations

Workshop participants envisioned the area continuing as an important office concentration within downtown. Participants felt that it would be desirable to strengthen the connection between the Lake and office development and the Uptown District at Broadway, with its existing BART station and contemplated retail center. 17th Street and 20th Street were viewed as strong pedestrian access routes. It was felt that these routes should be enhanced as pedestrian ways.

Oakland in this process? How would you organize to overcome these impediments and to accomplish your vision? Develop into priorities.

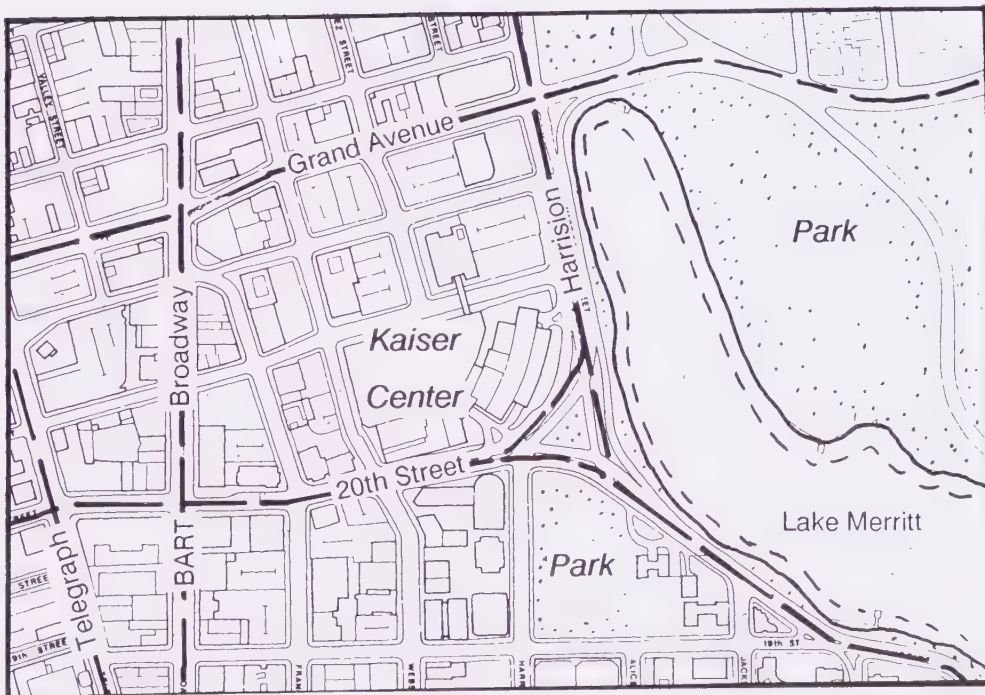
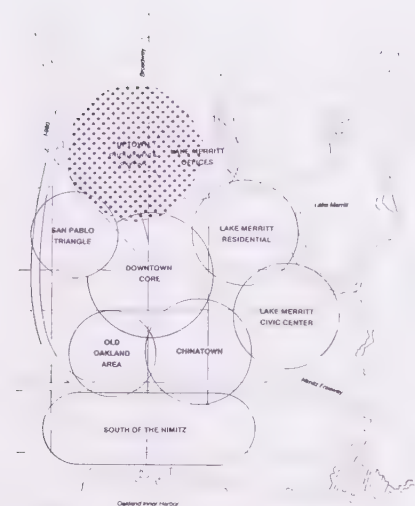


Figure 24: Lake Merritt Office Neighborhood





## UPTOWN

### Existing Conditions

The Uptown District was developed early in the twentieth century as a retail/entertainment district. The area houses much of the City's large retailers, Emporium Capwell and I. Magnin among them. The district also houses the Paramount Theater, a facility that accommodates the performing arts, and the unoccupied Fox Oakland Theater. Uptown is characterized by a combination of early twentieth century and Art Deco architecture, and large surface parking lots. The neighborhood also contains a sizable automobile sales and service sector north of Grand Avenue.

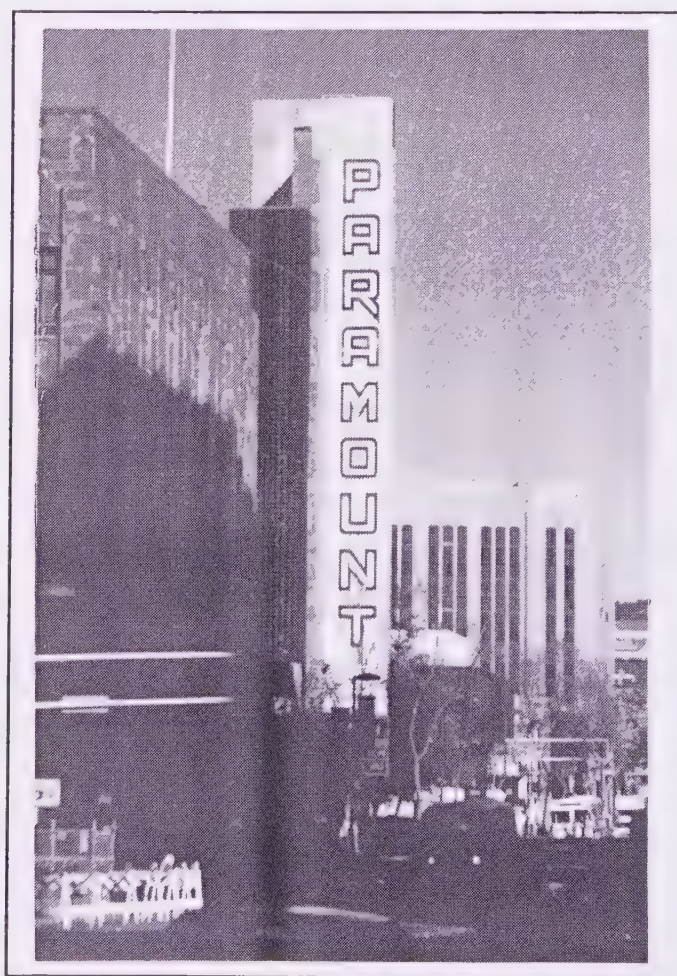


Figure 25: Upper Broadway in Uptown Neighborhood

## Recommendations

Workshop participants envisioned the Uptown neighborhood continuing as a retail/entertainment district. A major new retail center is contemplated for the area north of 17th Street and west of Broadway to San Pablo Avenue. Workshop participants believed it important that such a center be oriented toward Broadway, rather than being internalized. Three alternative schemes for retail were considered. In all of the schemes, retail development would consist of department store anchors at the existing I. Magnin and Emporium Capwell sites, with other retail development occurring along Broadway and Telegraph Avenue. One option would create an open space in the block bounded by Telegraph, Broadway, 18th



Figure 26: Uptown Neighborhood



and 19th, around which retail stores would be arranged, similar to Union Square in San Francisco. In this scheme, the Cathedral Building would assume the prominence of a landmark “campanile” tower. Some participants suggested that the Rotunda could be used to house a major department store, as a southern anchor to retail development. Another option would place a major department store to the north of the Fox Theater. Although the precise solutions for the retail center were open to debate, it was agreed that retail development should be integrated with the existing downtown. A number of participants also suggested that the retail development might be phased incrementally, rather than developed all at once.

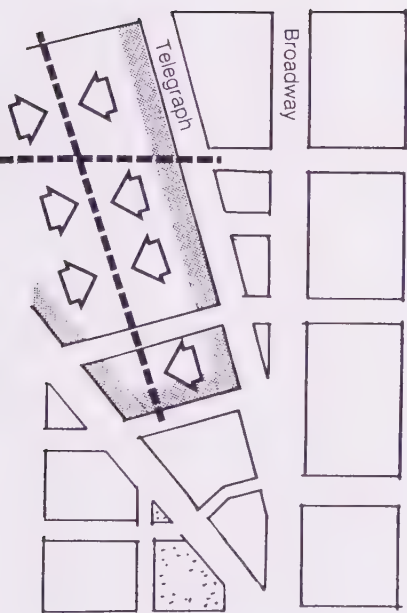


Figure 27: An inward-focused development was disliked by most workshop participants.

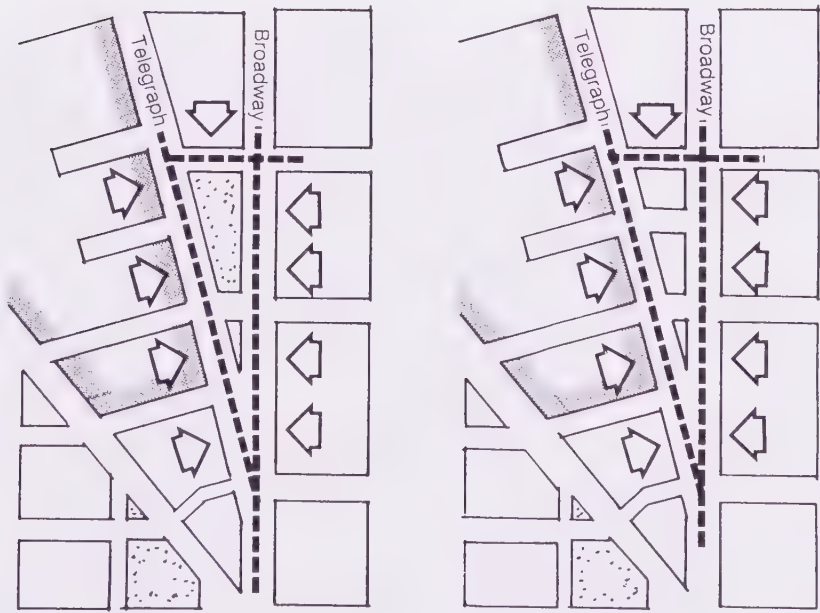


Figure 28: Workshop participants favored an outward-focused development either with or without a central square between Telegraph and Broadway.

#### IV. Build Upon the Existing Downtown Structure





A number of the workshop participants remarked that the downtown seemed to be “chaotic”, “lacking order,” “incoherent.” However, the street and open space systems of the downtown provide a strong framework on which a coherent downtown can be developed.

*“The primary civic elements need to be pulled together: City Hall, major public open space, arts center are scattered throughout the city.”*

*John Glover*

## REINFORCE THE PROMINENCE OF BROADWAY

Broadway constitutes a physical embodiment of Oakland’s history. The questions were asked; “Is Broadway a street of dreams, or a street of reduced expectations?” “Is Broadway a street that wants to be a center of activity in the downtown or does it already perform too many functions?” Many in the workshop believed that Broadway and downtown Oakland are synonymous. The success of downtown is directly related to the success of its main street, Broadway.

### Broadway As a Spine

Broadway was used as a reference point for locating points within the downtown. Most of the downtown neighborhoods have some direct spatial relation to Broadway. Broadway acts as a spine for the downtown. The workshop was organized around the premise that the future of downtown needed to incorporate a strong vision for the future of Broadway.



*Figure 29: View North on Broadway from Vicinity of I-880*

*"We don't have to build up huge high-rises up and down Broadway. A well thought out plan of the various zones along Broadway will help with siting of new buildings and placement of open spaces. Right now, Broadway is a hodgepodge and much of the retail is depressing."*  
Paul Grossberg



*Broadway View - Mashaal Ahmadi*

Participants felt that areas adjacent to Broadway should remain distinct but that these areas should “embrace Broadway.” Suggestions were made for linkages between the Kaiser Center area and Broadway and between the City Hall area and Broadway. The group proposed formal “gateways” to Chinatown and Old Oakland. It also recommended stronger links between Broadway and Lake Merritt. Most every area in downtown was described in terms of its relation to Broadway.

**Broadway As a Place**

Workshop participants discussed the ways in which Broadway functions both as a connector to surrounding neighborhoods and as a destination. Participants spoke specifically about the future of Broadway as a central place in the downtown.

Participants suggested several treatments to the street which would enhance Broadway's importance:

- A pedestrian friendly environment should be created along Broadway. A number of participants felt that this would need to include improved maintenance on Broadway. Landscaping was viewed as an important element in enhancing the "pedestrian-appeal" of the street. However, improved landscaping would need to be coupled with improved maintenance.



Figure 30: Drawing by workshop group illustrating Broadway as activity center.



*"Broadway from at least 23rd to Jack London is very segmented. A facade program should be planned and implemented."*  
Lois R. Parr

- Some participants suggested creation of a pedestrian zone on Broadway, while others argued that efficient auto circulation on the street was essential.
- Workshop participants recommended that surface parking lots located on Broadway would need to be replaced with a continuous wall of active building uses.
- Participants recommended that a continuous variety of activities, such as retail, personal services, tourism, cultural, or entertainment should be encouraged along the ground floors of Broadway buildings from the Estuary to Grand Avenue. Workshop participants believed that the proposed retail development in the uptown area should have a Broadway frontage. New hotels and entertainment facilities should be located on Broadway.
- Participants agreed that the Nimitz Freeway underpass was intimidating and discouraged pedestrian use. Various treatments were proposed for its improvement: a neon sculpture, a water feature, or an aquarium beneath the Nimitz. The construction of a high-rise "signature building" which would be visible from the freeway was also suggested as a way to improve the area and promote the downtown to passing motorists.



Figure 31: Participants suggested that the Nimitz underpass on Broadway be improved.

- Participants suggested making transit improvements on Broadway. The distance between Jack London Square and Grand Avenue is just over one mile. Participants mentioned several means by which accessibility could be improved for downtown workers, residents, and visitors. In the short term, this included expanded free downtown bus service. In the long term, this included a people mover system, or a light rail system on Broadway.
- Locate high-rise buildings along Broadway to signal its importance. Such buildings might house offices, cultural activities, or tourism-related uses such as hotels.

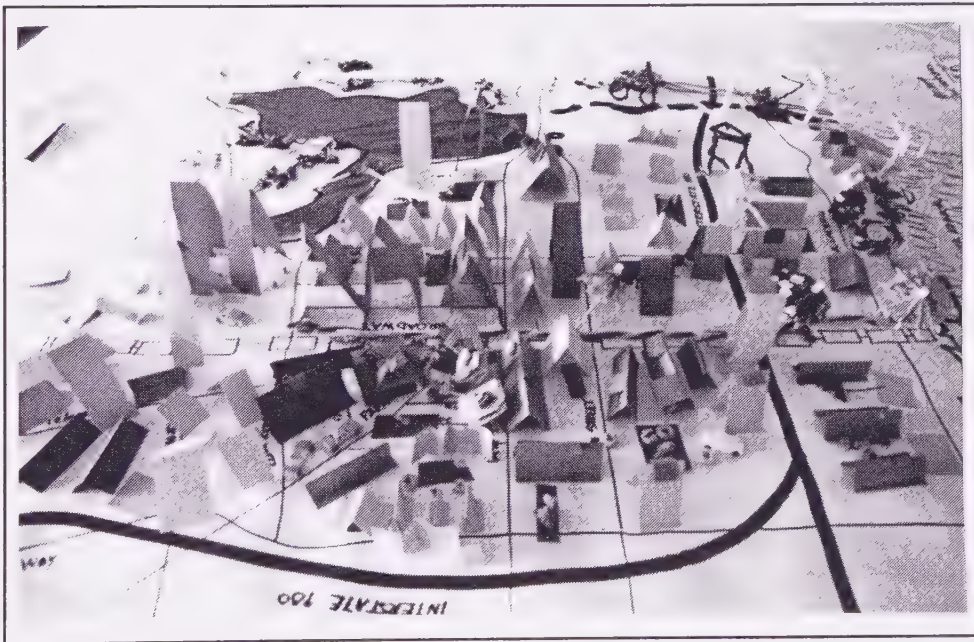
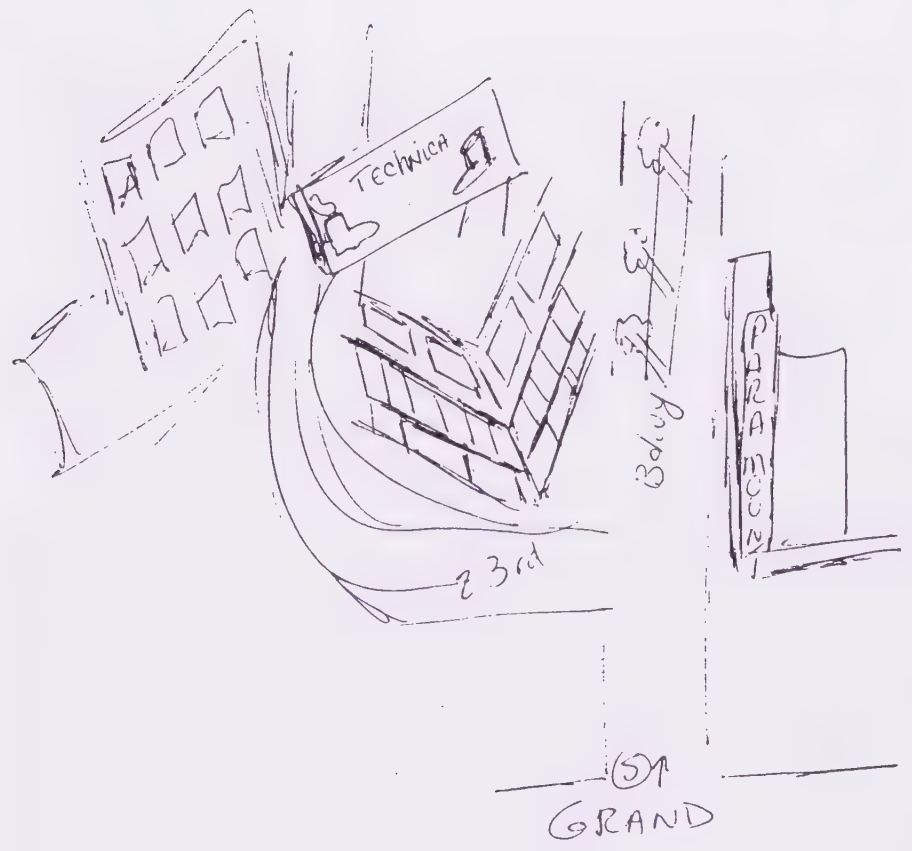


Figure 32: Workshop group model shows dense development along Broadway.

- Some participants felt that streetscape elements could be used to reinforce the importance of Broadway as a ceremonial street. These might include plantings, banners, historic lightposts, and other thematic features.

- Participants felt that Broadway should have "entrances " at the south end and northern "downtown" boundary. These could be formal gateways or architectural treatments such as a fountain, monument, or building. The exact location of a north-end gateway was debated by workshop participants. Grand Avenue, 27th Street, and MacArthur Boulevard were all suggested.
- The participants suggested that water be an element of the Broadway streetscape, possibly in the form of fountains or canals.



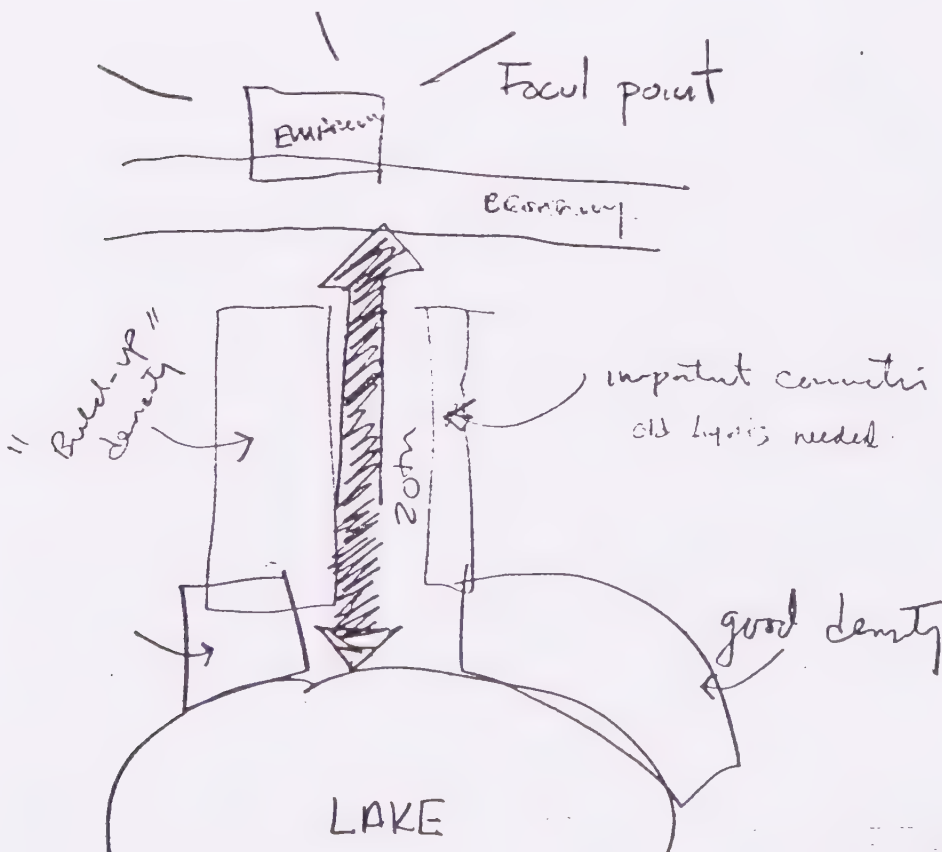


## Strengthen Other Linkages Between Downtown Activity Centers

Pathways should be reinforced in downtown which link neighborhoods and activity centers to each other as well as back to Broadway. This system of linkages should provide a structure to the downtown which is apparent to a regular user or visitor to the downtown. Linkages would be comprised of streets and open spaces. The street system of Oakland emphasizes north-south movement. East-west thoroughfares are rarely continuous through the downtown. East-west connections that included a link to Broadway would strengthen the neighborhood centers and reinforce the central role of Broadway.

The following east-west linkages were mentioned:

- 17th Street currently provides a continuously active link between Lake Merritt and Broadway. The preservation of the pedestrian character of this street was mentioned as vulnerable to new large scale development. Participants felt that other linkages between the Kaiser Center area and Broadway, such as those at 19th and 20th Streets, were important but are currently weak and need to be reinforced.



Jeffrey Chew

- 14th Street could function as a major link between the downtown and east and west Oakland neighborhoods. The group suggested that this street's importance could be reinforced through streetscape improvements, or through its use as a light rail route.
- 12th Street has potential to provide a link between the Lake Merritt cultural and civic institutions and City Center/Old Oakland. Such a thoroughfare could possess a "cultural" theme, linking an established civic/cultural arts center with a potential culture/entertainment district.
- A waterfront promenade could be built to connect the Estuary at Jack London Square to Lake Merritt along the channel. Such a connection could be developed as a continuous green space or parkway. Participants recognized the complexity of providing a pedestrian connection from the esplanade to Lake Merritt through the existing maze of roadways at the south end of Lake Merritt.



Figure 33: Workshop Group showed an esplanade linking Lake Merritt to the Estuary.

## V. Strengthen Attributes Which Contribute to Sense of Place





## V. STRENGTHENED ATTRIBUTES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO SENSE OF PLACE

43

Workshop participants frequently cited climate, open spaces, water, historic character, geographic setting, cultural diversity, and a spirit of civic cooperation as attributes to be maintained and enhanced as downtown is developed.

*"The city has a number of small open spaces that have great potential but won't work as presently designed."*

*John Glover*

### OPEN SPACE NETWORK

Open, public spaces were mentioned as a significant feature in the "favorite city" exercise. Such open spaces are perfect for Oakland. It's climate is nearly perfect. The need for skywalks or enclosed malls does not exist in Oakland and was rejected by workshop participants. The City was originally laid out with several parks in its downtown. Many still exist. Lake Merritt Park was often cited as an invaluable asset. Several additions to the existing open space system were suggested by the workshop participants:

- a new park west of the existing City Hall, in place of the existing parking garage;
- a rejuvenated City Hall Plaza;



*Figure 34: Workshop participants recommended that City Hall Plaza should be rejuvenated.*



Don Dommer



Figure 35: Participants believed that the area near 14th and Broadway needed to be improved.

- improvements to plaza in front of the Wells Fargo Building at 14th and Broadway;
- a new park east of City Hall Plaza, where the Broadway Building now stands;
- a treatment at the Nimitz Freeway underpass, including water, sound, or light;
- new water features at Latham Square and at City Hall Plaza;
- increased landscaping in the median of Broadway.



## HISTORIC RESOURCES

In describing their “favorite cities,” participants often mentioned historic character as an important attribute. Oakland contains a number of historic buildings and districts. Participants felt that historic resources should be maintained and celebrated where possible. The preservation of historic structures was cited as especially important in areas where new development threatens them with demolition. The small-scale commercial district near 17th Street and Franklin was cited as an example. The participants believed that existing restoration activities should be continued and encouraged.

*"To blend old and new will continue to be a great challenge."*

*Gordon Henderson*



*Figure 36: Some participants felt that small-scale commercial buildings at 17th and Franklin need to be protected from encroachment.*

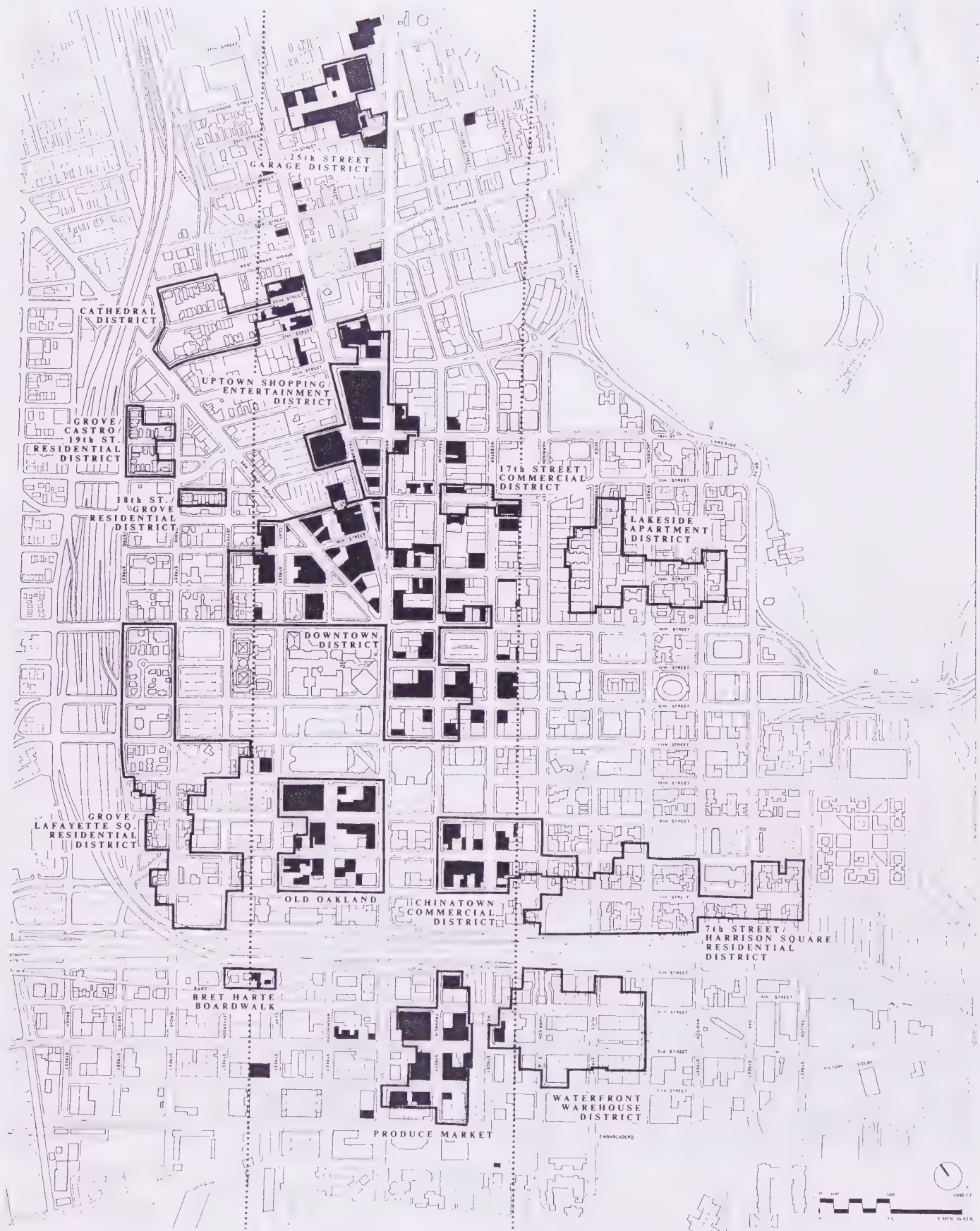
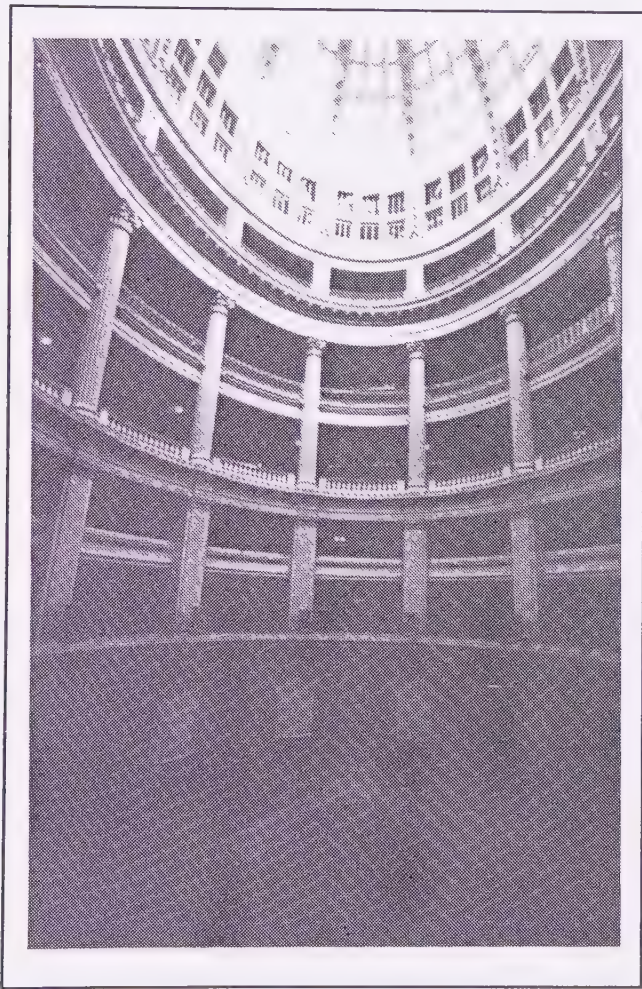


Figure 37: Historic Buildings and Districts



Participants debated potential reuses for the Rotunda and the Broadway Building. It was suggested that these buildings could house important municipal functions, acting as a City Hall complex, either in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, the existing, earthquake-damaged structure. Others suggested that the Rotunda could house a major department store.



*Figure 38: The Rotunda was considered for re-use by Workshop participants.*



Participants recommended that historic structures which were seismically damaged in the Loma Prieta earthquake should be repaired, where possible. Some suggested that an evaluation of the viability of such building repairs be completed immediately. This applies to City Hall, the Broadway Building, and a number of other structures.

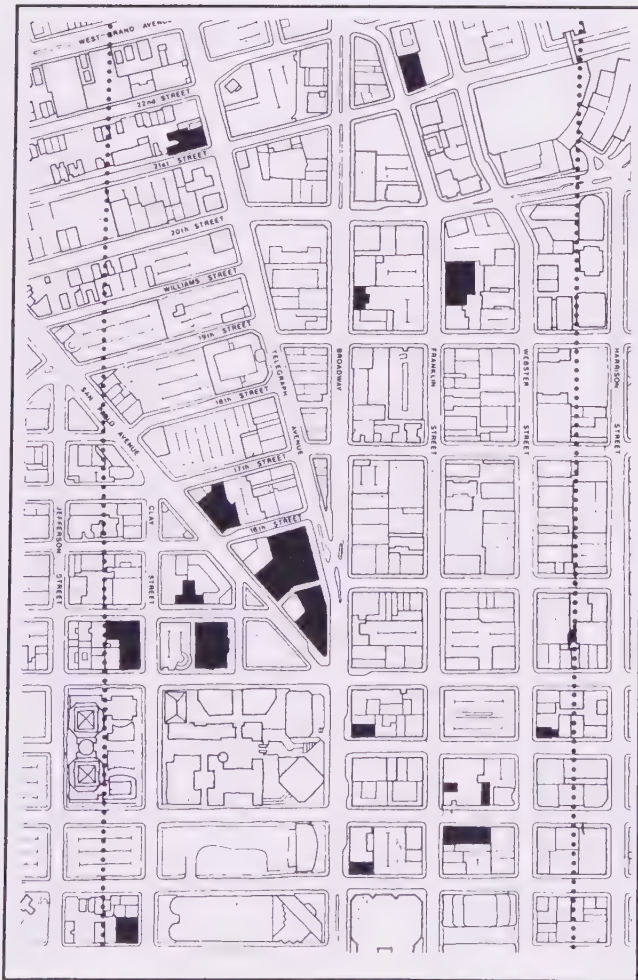


Figure 39: Earthquake Damaged Buildings

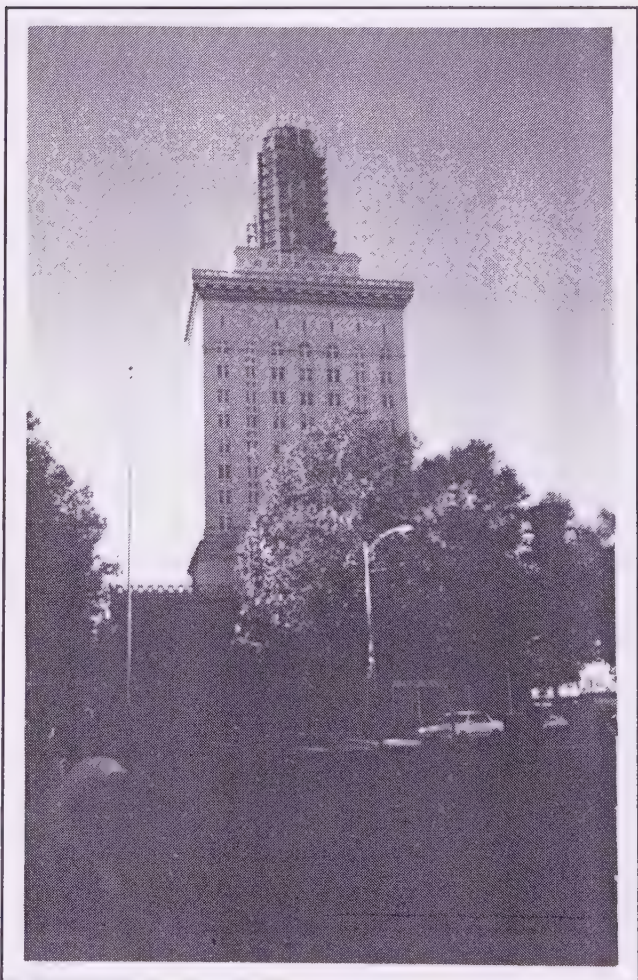


Figure 40: The future of City Hall was discussed by workshop participants.

## Water-Related

Workshop participants often mentioned a waterfront location as an important element in their “favorite city” selection. The Estuary, the channel, and Lake Merritt were all considered to be important resources in downtown Oakland. Participants suggested the following actions be taken to maximize the use of Oakland’s waterfront resources:

- Broadway-Lake Merritt connections.

All participants mentioned the need to strengthen the connection between Broadway and Lake Merritt. Though not distant physically, the relationship linking the Lake and Broadway is unclear. This could be strengthened through streetscape treatments, such as lighting, landscaping, fountains, banners, and monuments.

- Housing development at the Estuary.

Many believed that the opportunity exists to bring more people to the water’s edge by building housing and creating public open space along the Estuary east of Jack London Square. Such development could connect to the proposed Estuary-Channel-Lake Merritt esplanade.



Figure 41: The Estuary offers dramatic water vistas.

*"Lake Merritt acts like a magnet, bringing the people of Oakland together at a single place."*

Jeffrey Chew

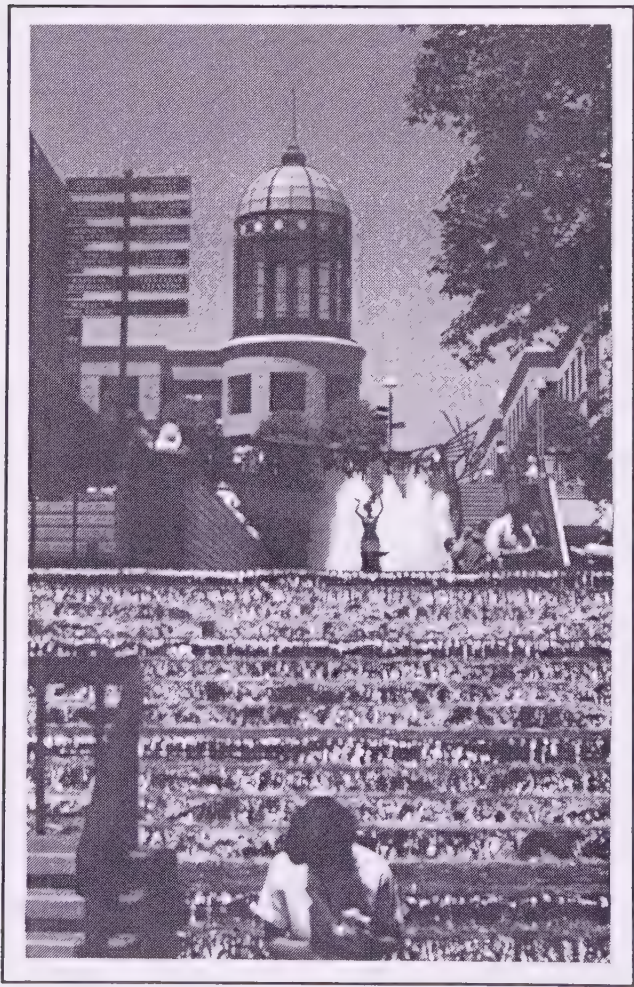


- Esplanade development

The potential for a public esplanade that would link Jack London Square to Lake Merritt was suggested by many participants. This esplanade would link several existing open spaces, such as Estuary Park, Channel Park, Laney College, and Lake Merritt Park.

- Inland Public Fountains/Water Features

Bringing water inland via a Broadway canal between Jack London Square and the Nimitz underpass, and the placement of fountains throughout the downtown, such as at Latham Square, were suggested as ways to enhance the presence of water in downtown Oakland.



*Figure 42: Participants suggested placement of fountains in the downtown, such as at City Center.*



## Landmarks

Workshop participants agreed that landmarks, or “place-makers” are important elements to be used in orienting oneself to the downtown, in communicating the history and character of an area, and in celebrating and enhancing the special qualities of a particular place. Such landmarks do exist and should be further encouraged to exist in Oakland. Suggestions regarding such existing and new landmarks included the following:

- Gateways should mark special places in the downtown along major thoroughfares. Such gateways might consist of fountains, sculptures, or other special landscaping. Participants suggested that they might occur at Jack London Square, the Broadway underpass to the Nimitz Freeway, the corner of 14th and Broadway, and 27th Street or Grand Avenue.



*Figure 43: The office towers of downtown act as landmarks denoting the city's center.*

The Broadway and Cathedral Buildings were cited as special places. These buildings mark two important intersections of Broadway: at 14th and San Pablo, and at 16th and Telegraph. Some participants felt that the “flatiron” character of these intersections was an important feature contributing to the character of downtown Oakland. Participants called for either the preservation and illumination of the existing Broadway Building, or a new development which provided a special treatment of this corner. The illumination of the Cathedral Building and the redesign of Latham Square were also suggested.



Keep Broadway Building  
Give Route project  
a B-way address  
by creating square  
between Telegraph  
& B-way.

Keep East side of Broadway  
as continuous wall. Place  
all open space on East  
side.

Diana Ketchum

Figure 44: Workshop participants cited the earthquake damaged Broadway Building as a local landmark to be preserved if possible.

Features to draw attention to neighborhoods or notable activities adjacent to Broadway, such as a Chinatown Gate or an Old Oakland Gate were considered by workshop participants.

## VI. Encourage a Pedestrian Quality to the Downtown





## VI. ENCOURAGE A PEDESTRIAN QUALITY IN THE DOWNTOWN

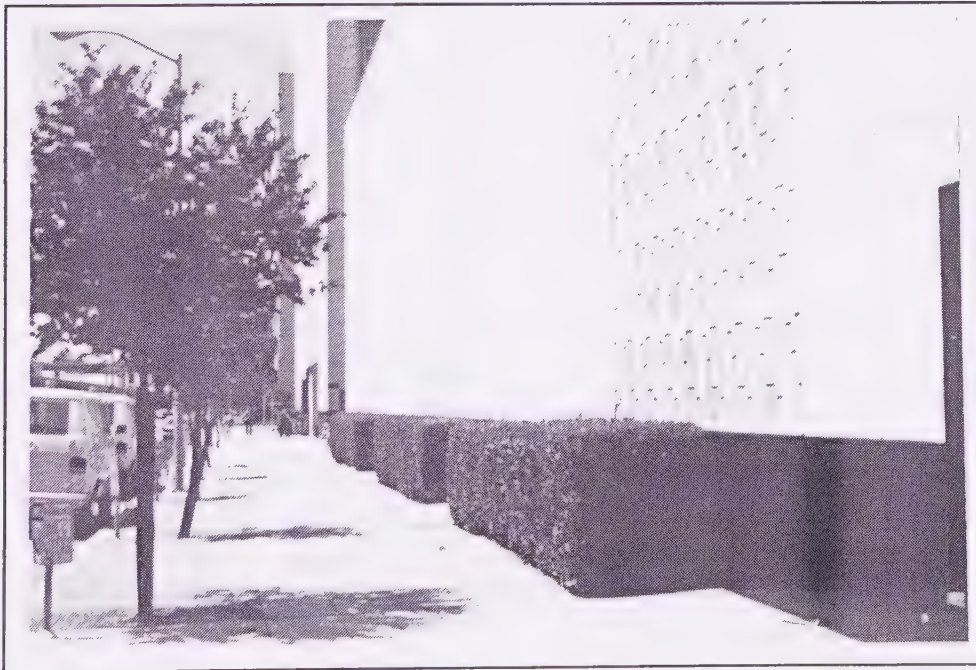
In citing the characteristics of their “favorite cities” and their aspirations for downtown Oakland, workshop participants consistently called for a strong, pedestrian environment. Oakland possesses a wonderful climate. Pedestrian activity is viable throughout the year in Oakland. The excitement of the downtown skyline needs to be matched with an excitement on the downtown street. Workshop participants felt that a key element in enlivening downtown would be a greater amount of activity in the streets and open spaces of downtown. Increased street-level activity would enhance the quality of the downtown environment from the point of view of the pedestrian. Urban vitality would be reinforced by “around-the-clock” activities throughout the downtown. Workshop participants often mentioned a pleasant pedestrian quality among those attributes which distinguished their favorite cities.

*"The feeling of 'friendliness' and life is in direct proportion to the openness and activity of first floors opening onto the sidewalk."*

*John Glover*

### EMPHASIZE CONTINUOUS STREET-LEVEL ACTIVITY

Workshop participants agreed that the presence in the downtown of vacant storefronts, blank building bases, and surface parking lots detracted from the ground floor environment. This discontinuous environment contributed to a lack of activity which, in turn, contributed



*Figure 45: Blank Building Base*

to a perceived lack of security. The creation of continuous stretches of "active" street frontage was seen as desirable by workshop participants. The vacancies at the "100%" corner of 14th and Broadway were cited as an example of the negative effects of poor ground-floor use.

Participants did recognize that there were limitations to the role that retail development could play in stimulating pedestrian traffic. Innovative ground floor uses which were not retail-dependent were called for, including service commercial, eating/drinking, cultural or entertainment activities.

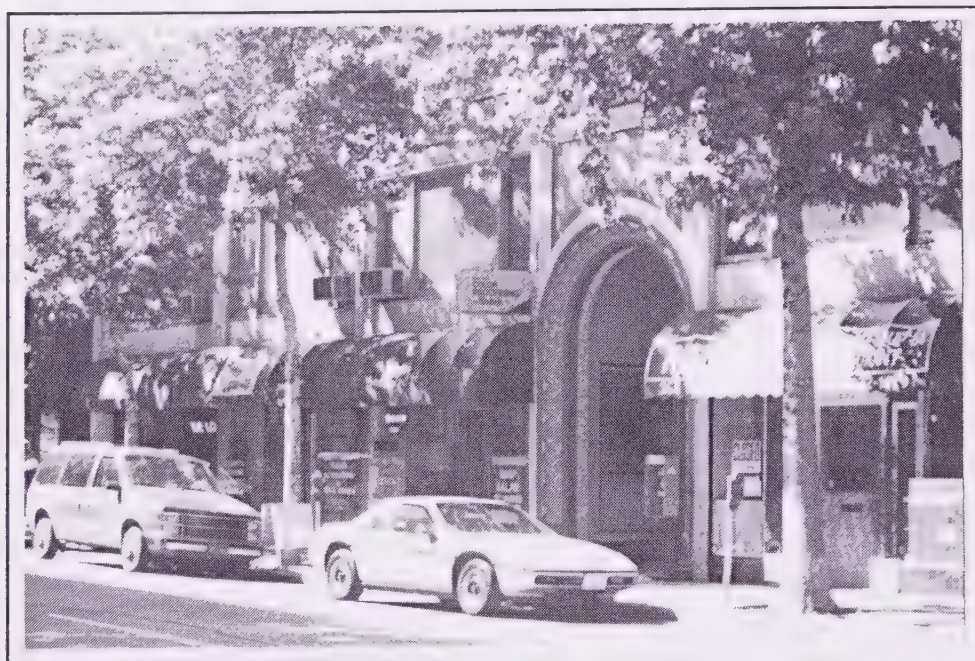


Figure 46: Pedestrian-Oriented Building Base

## ACCOMMODATE VEHICULAR NEEDS IN A MANNER SUPPORTIVE OF PEDESTRIANS

Workshop participants felt that vehicular needs of the downtown should be met, but that measures to accommodate the vehicular traffic in downtown should not compromise the quality of the pedestrian environment. An example of this is seen in the maze of vehicle routes at the south end of Lake Merritt. These roadways sever the Civic Center from the Lake, creating a formidable obstacle to the creation of a pedestrian link between the Lake and the Estuary.

*"Increase police presence to make people feel SAFE in our Downtown. In the light of S.F.'s decline in safety and appeal we have a wonderful window of opportunity to become the Bay Area's center."*

*Allen Michaan*





*Figure 47: Surface parking lots downtown are detrimental to a continuous, active pedestrian environment.*

Participants also believed that parking facilities should be designed with the pedestrian in mind. They insisted that parking be accommodated in buildings devoted to other primary uses where possible. Should stand-alone garages be warranted, a preference was expressed for ground-floor retail or other active uses. It was stated that parking structures, especially those contemplated at the retail center development, should respect, and not block, the existing street network. Finally, participants agreed that surface parking lots should be phased out of the downtown as quickly as possible.

## **ASSURE AND COMMUNICATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF PERSONAL SAFETY**

A major consideration in encouraging active pedestrian life on the street is assuring safety. Security is not necessarily achieved through increased police presence but by a general atmosphere of street activity.

### ENCOURAGE PUBLIC TRANSIT

Well-developed public transit systems were often mentioned among the attributes in the “favorite cities” exercise. Participants generally agreed that an over-reliance on the automobile had adverse effects on pedestrian activity and street vitality. Mass transit, besides encouraging pedestrian activity, would increase accessibility between downtown areas, especially those on or adjacent to Broadway. A number of alternatives were put forward by participants for providing effective mass transit in the downtown:

- The existing AC Transit “Shuttle” service could be expanded. The bus operates on Broadway primarily during lunch hours. A proposal would be to add routes to the shuttle to serve Kaiser Center and the Lake Merritt Civic Center.
- A “free-fare” bus zone could be established which would apply to all AC Transit buses within a downtown zone. Such an alternative would require relatively little capital investment.
- A transit mall could be constructed on Broadway between Jack London Square and Grand Avenue. The mall would be limited to buses, service vehicles, and pedestrians. Participants cited the success of a similar treatment in Portland, Oregon.



*Figure 48: Downtown Oakland is the center of the regional BART system.*

A Surface Light Rail System might be developed. Two types of systems were suggested: (1) a light rail shuttle connecting the Jack London waterfront with the Lake Merritt office complex, and (2) a light rail transit system serving the inner East Bay. Such intraurban systems were suggested for 3rd, 12th or 14th Streets, San Pablo, Telegraph, and Grand Avenues. These alternatives are illustrated in the following figures. Workshop participants suggested that these alternatives might represent short-term and long-term phases of light rail development.

*"Bring back streetcars"*  
Allen Michaan



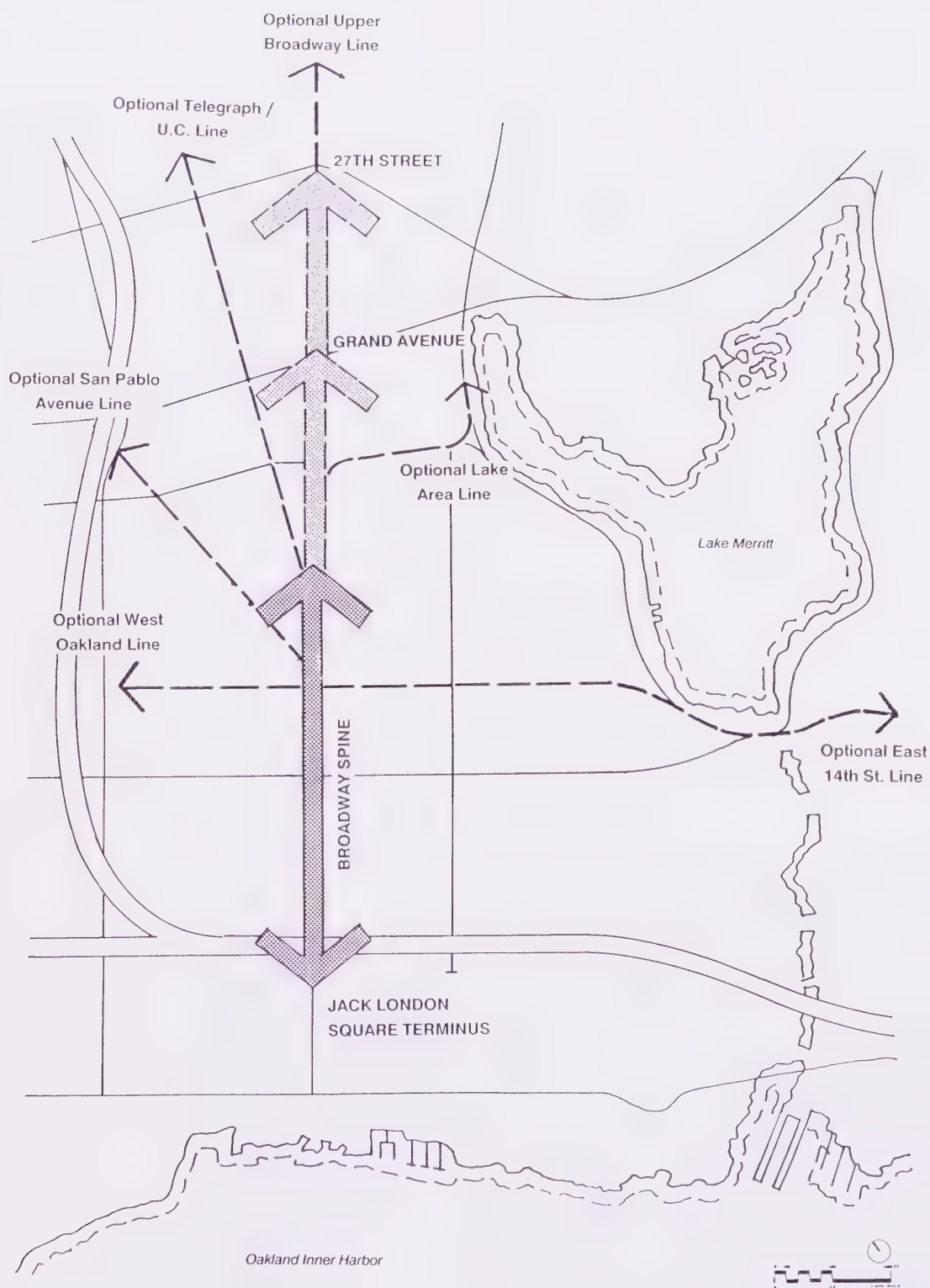


Figure 49: Workshop participants favored constructing a light rail line along Broadway between Jack London Square and the Uptown Neighborhood. In addition, many participants suggested making light rail along on this spine the focus of a larger East Bay light rail system.

## VII. Build Citywide Support for the Downtown





Participants referred to downtown as “everybody’s neighborhood,” a “civic living room,” where diverse populations come to interact. It can provide employment, economic, and cultural benefits to all the citizens of a city. “Grass-roots” support for the downtown is essential to ensuring balanced and successful downtown development. In order to encourage citywide support, the advantages of downtown should be extended to all the citizens of Oakland. The availability of these advantages (cultural, economic, historical, etc.) needs to be communicated effectively to the citizens. The benefits of downtown development can contribute positively to other city priorities. Workshop participants felt that it would be important to establish this relationship in order to provide for increased coordination between downtown and the neighborhoods.

### EXTEND THE BENEFITS OF DOWNTOWN GROWTH TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The vitality of downtown relies on its patronage by residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors. The completion of downtown projects can sometimes rely on citywide financial or regulatory participation. Both of these aspects of the downtown highlight the need to build citywide support for the downtown.

Workshop participants envisioned several ways in which downtown benefits may be extended to the neighborhoods:

- **Economic dividends** could be realized in the form of increased economic activity as well as an augmented tax base, to provide the city with financial resources to pursue programs such as health care, education, public safety, and maintenance.
- **Employment opportunities** could be extended to the citizens of Oakland through an improved job market.
- **Cultural benefits** such as museums, festivals, cultural activities, and other facilities which provide a reason for citizens to gather and celebrate civic life are an essential function of downtown.

IDENTIFY AND EXPAND CONSTITUENCY GROUPS

Workshop participants recognized a need to identify and bring together a broad constituency for the downtown from among Oakland’s citizens. The expansion of the base of downtown users will tangibly result in improved pedestrian life and vitality in the downtown. Increasing the constituency will also be reflected in increased enthusiasm on the part of the political structure to address downtown issues.

There was agreement among the participants that downtown constituents include the following:

*"Oakland's people are open, friendly,  
and curious - let's make a city that  
reflects that!"*  
Natalie Bayton

- City of Oakland residents;
- taxpayers and property owners;
- neighborhood associations.

## FOSTER COOPERATIVE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONS

Participants believed that it was important to communicate the benefits of a healthy downtown to all the citizens of Oakland. Their support would in turn strengthen the political will and financial resources to continue revitalizing the downtown. It was agreed that the downtown business community must demonstrate sensitivity toward the concerns of the citizens of the City if it expects the citizens of Oakland to support downtown development. An atmosphere of mutual cooperation must be established among stakeholders in the downtown's development.

An important concern expressed by the participants was the issue of downtown versus neighborhoods. The value of downtown development in providing jobs and economic resources to all citizens of Oakland must be demonstrated by private developers and by City officials. Broadening the downtown constituency to embrace those in the neighborhoods will help to defuse the rivalry which is said to exist between downtown and the neighborhoods.

*"Downtown is everybody's neighborhood."*

*Jeffrey Chew*

Workshop participants agreed that it would be important to revisit the list of workshop attendees to examine the need to broaden it. The downtown process must be understood to be inclusive and open. If downtown is to be a "citywide" neighborhood, the development of its future vision must involve a wide spectrum of citizens.

Workshop participants also addressed the question of exactly "whom else" this constituency might include. Is downtown to be a regional, national, or international center? Should activity from outside the City and Region take priority over the interests of Oakland's citizens?





## VIII. Develop an Outreach Strategy





### III. DEVELOP AN OUTREACH STRATEGY

Workshop participants felt that an effective outreach strategy needed to be developed within the City of Oakland. Participants wanted to improve the image of downtown as a place to live, play, and work. Outside the City of Oakland, an outreach program would be needed to provide a positive picture of the city to attract potential visitors, new residents, and investors.

#### COMMUNICATE WITH DOWNTOWN'S EXISTING CONSTITUENCY

The participants felt that a detailed strategy should be developed for generating interest in the downtown among City residents. Elements of such a strategy should include:

- an understandable vision plan with the concepts clearly defined and illustrated, but which is open to modification based on input from the constituents;
- a concise description of the benefits of the vision to the community, including a determination of benefits and beneficiaries;
- a clear explanation to the downtown business and residential communities concerning their role in developing the downtown;
- an effective and imaginative program to “Get the Word Out About Downtown” employing a diverse media campaign;
- the continued backing and support of the city’s political leadership, including the Mayor and Council;
- use of established channels of communication within the neighborhoods, including town meetings, educational institutions, churches, media.

Participants believed that the workshop should demonstrate an “Early Win” to the community which is easily understood and appreciated. Defining success to include the area of economic benefits and job creation was seen as essential to the outreach effort. These aspects of development were seen as possible avenues to stimulate interest among potential constituents.

Value was seen in offering the Visions workshop process to the neighborhoods. The workshop participants expressed enthusiasm for the workshop process and saw its value as a means of generating local visions, and as a way to garner support for the downtown. A parallel visioning process for neighborhoods could demonstrate the benefits of citizen participation in a revitalized downtown. The recently initiated Citywide Strategic Planning process instituted by the Mayor and Council might provide a basis for pursuing this suggestion.

### **IMPROVE THE IMAGE OF DOWNTOWN OAKLAND AT HOME AND ABROAD**

Participants believed that it was essential to improve the image of downtown Oakland held around the country and around the world. An element in improving the position of Oakland in the regional, national, and international market is the communication of the strengths of Oakland and its downtown as a city and a market. Equally important is the communication of an improved image to residents of Oakland and the East Bay, whose patronage of downtown is essential.

There was strong agreement among the workshop participants that Oakland’s image among its residents and workers is good. Participants often referred to the positive attributes of the City; its rich cultural diversity; physical features; Lake Merritt; Jack London Square; the new City Center development; and the neighborhood commercial districts.

However, the image of Oakland held by residents outside the City does not appear to reflect the positive attributes identified by the participants. It is the effective communication of the positive attributes to this segment of the population that was perceived as critical.



It was the general consensus among workshop participants that the City should develop an outreach campaign to communicate the positive attributes of Oakland. The concept would be to communicate to the world the civic pride, energy, consensus and accomplishments which exist in the City. Some objectives of the campaign might be to:

- Communicate the development goals;
- Demonstrate the positive things that take place in Oakland;
- Give people good reasons for being downtown.

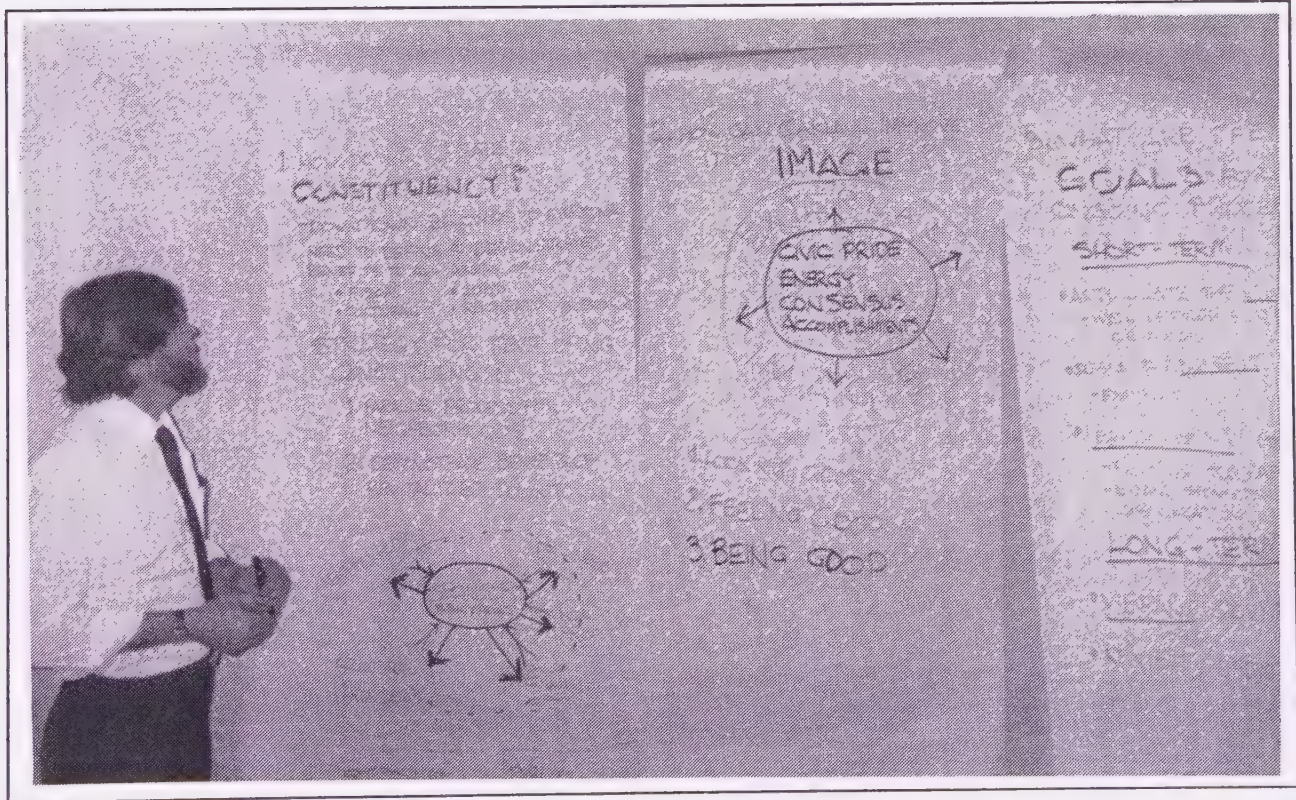


Figure 50: Workshop participant presents plan to improve downtown's image.





## IX. Maintain a Process To Guide the Future of Downtown





## **IX. MAINTAIN A PROCESS TO GUIDE THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN**

An ongoing process for coordinating and directing the future of downtown needs to exist. The “Taking Part” vision process has brought together a number of concerned downtown stakeholders to begin to articulate a clear set of visions which can provide a direction for the future of downtown Oakland. This process should be continued and expanded. Such a process should provide ongoing input from the community to help guide, direct, and oversee development in the downtown. This effort should be coordinated with an updated Central District Development Program and the Citywide Strategic Plan being undertaken by the Mayor, City Council, and Chamber of Commerce with public involvement. A downtown management program should also be considered for Oakland. Such a program might centralize maintenance and security efforts, coordinate the operating hours of retail stores and organize downtown promotional activities.

### **CONTINUE A DYNAMIC VISIONS PROCESS**

Participants agreed that the Visions process can perform a valuable function to downtown Oakland and should continue. The exact form needs to be determined. Workshop participants acknowledged the role they would be willing to play in building the broader constituency and achieving the goals identified. It was the consensus of the group that they wanted to continue the process. As a group they felt that they could serve in the following capacities:

- Advocates/Change Agents
- Influence public policy
- Be an advocacy group to bring in other interest groups and make presentations on the downtown vision plan
- Help with the visioning process for neighborhoods
- Participate in the roadshows to neighborhoods outside the downtown
- Work to convince political leadership of downtown’s importance
- Weigh in on issues that relate to the vision with downtown stakeholders.

## **COORDINATE WITH THE CITYWIDE STRATEGIC PLANNING EFFORT**

A community-wide effort is currently being undertaken, under the auspices of the Mayor, City Council, and the Chamber of Commerce, to develop a long-range strategic plan for the future of Oakland. It is essential that downtown planning occur within the framework of this Citywide effort. Coordination of downtown development efforts with those of the citywide vision can help to ensure that downtown development occurs in balance with, and in response to, other City needs.

## **UPDATE THE CDDP**

The Central District Development Program (CDDP) was completed five years ago. The Program provides a basis for understanding downtown issues and sets out detailed recommendations for developing and managing the downtown. The CDDP provides a tool for coordinating and setting out public sector actions to be undertaken in achieving the downtown vision. The CDDP must be updated to reflect existing conditions and to be coordinated with results of the Taking Part Visions process.

The detailed recommendations for the future of downtown need to be revisited. The impetus for these plans should come from a guided community effort. Members of the Visions committee could work with City staff or with an outside consultant to guide the update of the CDDP.

## **ADOPT A DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

The tasks facing downtown Oakland will require both a short-term and a long-term commitment. The Visions workshop participants can be instrumental in establishing a number of the programs which will assist in seeing the visions developed and implemented. Achieving success in downtown Oakland could benefit from the presence of an entity to coordinate downtown development with various public and private efforts, and to manage programs of outreach, constituency-building, and communication. A downtown entity could work with the City, with the Visions Committee, and with private individuals to direct efforts towards a strategic approach to downtown planning and development.

The downtown development process in Oakland could benefit from improved strategic planning, coordination with related ongoing processes such as the Mayor/City Council strategic plan for Oakland, a broadened constituency, and effective public relations. Oakland has a number of overlapping, often competing, interests concerned with the development of downtown. The presence of a “downtown entity” which can coordinate the many interests in the downtown would be highly instrumental in creating an effective, unified, downtown development strategy. A review of downtown organizational structures in other cities as well as in Oakland should be undertaken. Recommendations for an institutional structure which can effectively coordinate downtown affairs should be developed.

The final form of such an entity is yet to be determined. However, workshop participants discussed a number of responsibilities that a downtown organization might undertake:

- Developing a long-range strategy to implement vision goals;
- Developing a fiscal plan based on the vision strategy;
- Assisting the City in evaluating potential projects;
- Managing the ongoing visions process in the downtown;
- Functioning as an advocate for downtown with the neighborhoods, with other downtowns, and with the county, state, and federal governments.

It would seem essential that an entity be formed from among those involved with the “Taking Part Visions Workshop” to oversee the development of a permanent Downtown Management Program.





## X. Appendices





**PROJECT CHRONOLOGY**

The Downtown Visions project was originally conceived as a planning and urban design exercise for Broadway. There had been a realization that Broadway was the integral piece of downtown Oakland--the spine so to speak-- and that the future of Downtown was inextricably tied to that of the street. The emphasis of the exercise was to be upon using a workshop approach to develop design solutions from within the downtown community. Such a “grass-roots” based approach, it was believed, would ensure that any design solution would be grounded in the community itself, rather than being imposed upon the community by outside designers.

The Loma Prieta earthquake of October 17, 1989 abruptly widened the scope of the Broadway study. Substantial damage to buildings on either side of Broadway added a dimension of redevelopment planning to what had once been a design-directed study. The scope thus widened, it became incumbent upon the body that had been the Broadway Symposium to broaden its mandate to encompass the redevelopment effort. It was decided to maintain the “grass-roots” workshop approach as a mechanism for addressing the redevelopment and planning issues.

**Meetings of the Broadway Symposium Task Force**

Meetings were held with members of the city’s OEDE staff and with some members of the Broadway Symposium to discuss those issues that warranted addressing in this study, and to begin to develop a preliminary list of workshop participants. It was felt that any product of the study at hand would have to lend a policy direction to downtown development, something which was perceived as presently lacking.

Several meetings were held between the consulting team and the city staff to compose and refine the list of participants for the workshop. It was felt that three primary concerns needed to be addressed as the workshop attendee list was evolved:

- the list of attendees should represent as broad a picture of downtown stakeholders as possible, including residents and users of downtown as well as developers, residents, and city planning and development personnel;
- the list of attendees should be limited in size to ensure that a focussed and intimate atmosphere could be sustained at the workshops; and,
- attendees should be prepared to attend the workshop in its entirety, demonstrating a commitment to the workshop process and to downtown Oakland itself.

### **Analyses**

A number of analyses were undertaken by members of the consulting team in preparation for the initial workshop. In preparing these analyses, the extensive work undertaken for the Central District Development Program was consulted. The analyses were developed to provide an orientation to the workshop participants of Oakland's downtown-- to begin to develop a common vocabulary of understanding. The following analyses were undertaken:

- planning history;
- development climate, including an analysis of development susceptibility in the Broadway corridor and an overview of recent development projects;
- transportation circulation, transit issues in downtown;
- demographic breakdown of downtown employment and residential populations; and,
- patterns of activity in the downtown at weekday, week night, and weekend hours.

### Workshop #1- November 28-30, 1990

The initial workshop was held over the period of one evening and two full days in downtown Oakland. A comprehensive chronology of the workshop is presented as Appendix B to this report. The workshop led the participants through a series of exercises which developed a common vocabulary of experiences for considering downtown. Highlights of the workshop included a walking-bus tour of the study area, an exercise to describe one's favorite city, the development of a vision for downtown and the development of a vision for Broadway, the identification of obstacles for achieving visions, and a preliminary discussion of means for overcoming these obstacles.



*Figure 51: Workshop participants describe their "wishes" regarding downtown development.*



## **Synthesis of Workshop Results**

The results of the workshop were synthesized by the consulting team. An emphasis was placed on discerning the goals and visions obtained from the various workshop exercises. These goals and visions were compiled verbally and diagrammatically. An understanding of the workshop goals and visions was arrived at with the participation of the entire consulting team, the City's economics consultant, and City staff.

### **Workshop #2 - February 20, 1991**

The workshop began with a revisitation of the first workshop, including both its procedural aspects and the goals and visions derived from it. The purpose of this exercise was to obtain confirmation that the workshop results, as understood by the consultants, accurately reflected the intentions of the workshop participants. A presentation concerning the relationship between this "Visions" effort and the CDDP was made. The participants then conducted exercises, addressing the issues of constituency building, image, priorities, and next steps through the following questions:

- How would you build a broader constituency for the Downtown Vision?
- How can Oakland improve its image both internally and externally?
- What would be both the short-term and the long-term goals for the ongoing process?
- How do you perceive yourselves both as a group and individually?

Workshop participants were asked to discuss these questions by breaking into the same groups they were in during the first workshop session. The group grappled with answers and approaches to the question for approximately two hours. When the groups reported on their solutions/strategies for addressing the four questions, it was interesting to note the similarity and agreement in terms of approach. There was also a great deal of commonality among the participants about their concerns.

## WORKSHOP CHRONOLOGY

The workshop format was set up so as to involve citizens and encourage, even inspire, their own creative approaches, their own judgements and inputs. That is what happened in the workshop on downtown Oakland -- initially on November 28-30, 1990 and in a summary workshop on February 20, 1991.

The Office of Economic Development and Employment developed a wide ranging list of people who were invited to participate in the Vision process. More than 50 participants agreed to volunteer their time as representatives of the larger community. The workshop extended from a long evening after work through an intensive two day experience. Then, when the professional consultant team had synthesized the participants' ideas, sketches, and models, a second evening session was called to review the summary and make comments about anything they felt was lacking or overlooked.

### **Wednesday, November 28 (5-9 p.m.)**

The first evening began with introductions, an explanation of the process that would be followed and a team presentation of background materials which covered: the history of Oakland, the human ecology of Oakland, the circulation patterns, the planning context of the city, marketing and economics and the current character of Broadway.

All participants were then asked to write, draw or in some other way communicate what they wanted to have happen in downtown Oakland (AND, what they didn't want to have happen.) This information was displayed on a scroll which hung on the wall in the workshop headquarters the following two days. The items which emerged in this exercise were repeated in various ways during the next two days' exercises.

## EXERCISE

As a group, work out your vision of downtown Oakland -- include alternates if necessary for parts or whole of your vision. Consider housing, open space, entertainment, work spaces, diversity, special ethnic needs and desires, education, transportation, etc.

## SUMMARY

Housing:

Agreement that it is important

Diversity is important (income, type)

Entertainment/active uses desired:

Day/night

Want nightlife

"Can't buy happiness"



*Figure 52: Participants prepare vision for Downtown Oakland*



Downtown to be a draw for Oakland and beyond

Group wants downtown to have amenities -- not just be a place to work;  
want fun

Aquarium interesting idea

Downtown organization:

Some want to fill in gaps between current nodes:

Metropolitan downtown

Others want to emphasize nodes:

Maintain discreet pieces/villages

Focus on strengths of each

Preserve 17th and 19th Streets:

They are currently vulnerable

Cultural center:

By Lake or Broadway-focused?

Use 12th Street as link

If Broadway is to be the major spine:

People mover of some sort is needed

Transit may extend beyond downtown

Parking is an important determinant of city form:

Acceptance of congestion

Groups varied in ways to deal with it:

Under buildings

Off Broadway a specified length

At ends of light rail lines

Retail should be major draw for downtown:

Regional level of retail important

Some concentrated in one location, some spread around

Freeway overpass could be "blessing in disguise"

Needs some treatment

Extend Estuary Park down to Channel

Amenities and activity along Estuary

Housing along waterfront behind amenities

Recreate original public squares

COMMENTS TO VISION OF DOWNTOWN SUMMARY:

Why not advertise city to passing freeway traffic?

Question:

"Who is the downtown for? The region, Oakland or the downtown inhabitants?"

Conclusion:

The downtown is dedicated to both the people who live in the region and the people who live in Oakland.

There are problems with the "non-node" areas

We need a "Yellow Brick Road"

Lack of continuity

A final exercise was then presented to the group as homework. Each participant was asked to use a page in their notebook to draw, sketch or write about their favorite city -- describe it, and then relate it to their vision of Oakland.

Washington, D.C.

rich and varied resources

libraries

museums of all kinds

entertainment - sports/recreation

broad streets w/ trees & sun

access to/use of waterfront

open spaces - from monumental to intimate

"sense of place" and ability to locate

oneself by monuments and landmarks

diverse residential neighborhoods close

to "downtown" - which is also a series of places

ease of movement - walking routes and

the metro and regional transportation

transferable

waterfront use & access

strengthen residential neighborhoods

open streets & trees

"landmark" locations

## homework

Susan Chamberlin



**Thursday, November 29 (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.)**

The first full day of the workshop began with a four hour awareness (walking and driving) tour through the study area. Although Broadway was the focus for the workshop, the study area ran from Jack London Square to 27th Street and from Lake Merritt to I-980. Each participant had a workbook and was asked to follow the instructions and experience the tour as individuals. It was difficult to cover the area and follow the exercises in such a short time frame, but it provided the participants with a common experience and inventory of the study area.



*Figure 53: Participants gather for "Awareness Walk" through downtown.*

During the afternoon session on Thursday, each participant was at first asked to express their most revealing and intense experiences from the tour.

Afterward, participants worked in groups of 8 or 9 people to form various overall visions of the study area -- downtown Oakland. It was requested that these visions include the following issues: cultural, retail, housing, open space, entertainment, work spaces, transportation, diversity, special ethnic areas, education, etc.

These visions were then presented to the entire group.

## SUMMARY

Do not internalize retail center:

Center must be open to Broadway or front on Broadway.

Not an interior mall-like structure.

Some schemes also have major retail on East side of Broadway.

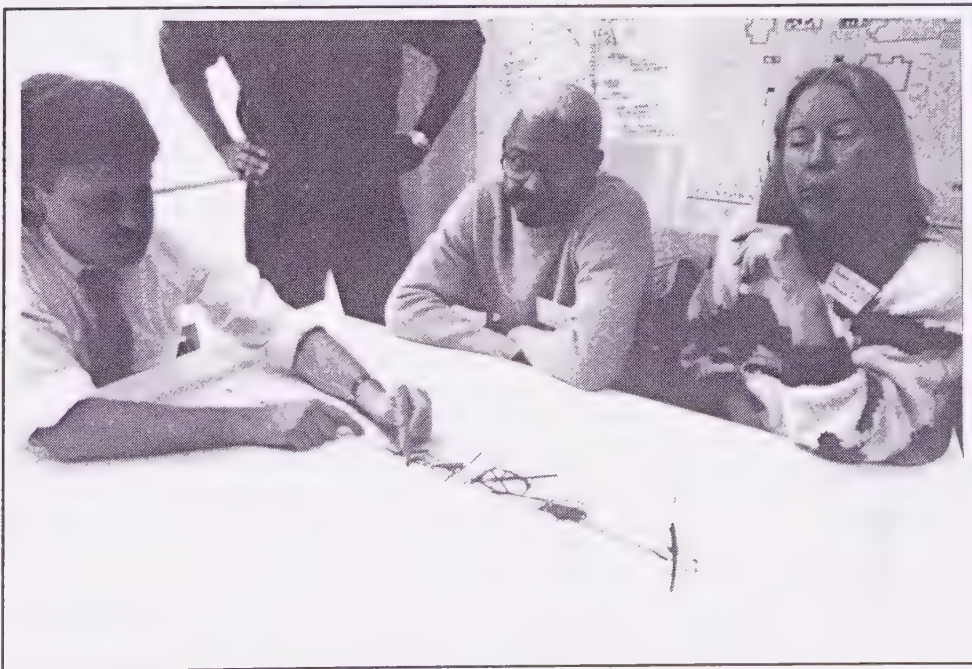
All liked idea of retail on east side, even if contained in ground level of office buildings.

One group suggested a pedestrian mall at some point on Broadway.

Comments that County government buildings need fixing up.

BART stations as major nodes and locations suggested.

Live/work spaces south of freeway.



*Figure 54: Participants prepare a vision for Broadway.*

### **Friday, November 30, (9-10:30 a.m.)**

Friday morning's session began with presentations from the homework exercise. Everyone gave the name of their favorite city, their reasons for the choice and related their findings to the City of Oakland. Some of their quotes follow:

#### **FAVORITE CITIES MENTIONED**

Helsinki, Beirut (before war), Paris, Dar es Salaam, London, Boston, San Antonio, San Francisco, Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, New York Manhattan, Chicago, Washington D.C., Baltimore, New Orleans, Geneva, Victoria, Atlanta, Edinburgh, Santa Cruz, Florence, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Lisbon, Vienna, Oakland.

#### **SUMMARY OF REASONS WHY**

- 1) These cities made good use of their topography and scenery.
- 2) They made good use of water.
- 3) They felt safe.
- 4) It felt good to walk in these cities.
- 5) They had good transportation systems.
- 6) They have a variety of open spaces and parks which give a sense of organization to the city.
- 7) They have a dynamic feeling.
- 8) They have ethnic diversity.
- 9) They have neighborhoods.
- 10) They have cultural facilities (including universities.)
- 11) They have a strong sense of character.
- 12) They were interesting and friendly.



- 13) They had lots of street level activity.
- 14) The streets were not for cars but were a way to organize the city.
- 15) There were lots of people living in the city.
- 16) The core of the city was important.
- 17) There were landmarks.
- 18) There was easy access.
- 19) The buildings/architecture were notable.

**Friday, November 30, (10:30 - noon)**

Participants returned to their groups to deal with an exercise which asked them to graphically present Broadway's role in downtown Oakland.

Broadway plays a major role in downtown Oakland. How do you perceive Broadway's role as part of your vision? (Minority opinions and alternates acceptable.)

**SUMMARY**

Broadway form:

East side of Broadway uniform

West side of Broadway softer/more varied

Recognized need for a City Center.

Something must be done about freeway.

Existing nodes of activity should be preserved.

People mover should be built -- may extend beyond downtown.

Shorten downtown area of Broadway - at Grand or 20th to north.



**Friday, November 30, (12:30 - 1:30 p.m.)**

In this afternoon session, participant groups were asked to define the impediments which needed to be overcome to achieve their visions for downtown Broadway. Then, they were asked to describe these challenges. A summary of those impediments/challenges follows:

What do you perceive as the impediments to achieving your vision for overall downtown Broadway?

Impediment Summary

“Battered-City” Image

Downtown versus neighborhoods and other projects (Big versus Small)  
(Special Interest Groups)

Political will and positive agendas

Lack of positive leadership and inability to “Bite the Bullet”

Social needs (drugs and lack of education)

Lack of “A Vision” or overall strategy

Lack of community consensus

Inability to resolve the retail center issue

**Friday, November 30, (2 - 3 p.m.)**

The next exercise asked the participant groups to think of ways to organize to overcome the impediments which had just been listed. Participants were asked to consider possible solutions, who should be responsible and long- and short-term priorities. The discussions which followed were about long- and short-term priorities and were long and energetic. They extended themselves into the final workshop exercise which was, “How to communicate to and involve other citizens of Oakland in this process? How would you organize to overcome these impediments and to accomplish your vision?” Develop priorities.

## SUMMARY

Develop a Road Map (clear vision)

Develop Consensus

Education - Leadership

Image - Start with Ourselves

Make the hard choices, "Bite the Bullet"

### **The Summary Workshop**

On February 20th, a Wednesday evening, all participants from the November workshop were invited to a summary of the findings. They were asked to look and listen for any discrepancies or omissions in the material and the way it was being interpreted. Two items were noted as having been missed or misinterpreted. The items were duly noted and the changes were made in the results.

The rest of the evening was spent dealing with the issue of how to continue the process which was begun in the first workshop. The discussions were energetic and dynamic. The group was united in their reluctance not to let go of the process until a direction could be found to utilize the energy and motivation which was evidenced in the workshop. The group wants to grow and evolve. They want to bring others into the movement for a renaissance in the downtown. They want to overcome differences and find the common goals which all citizens of Oakland share. They want to meet again.



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